

The Genealogy of the Savior

Luke 3:23-38

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.

Introduction:

One of the most interesting things about exegetical preaching is that the text dictates where we are going in the Bible and what topics we are going to preach. It forces us to deal with every word that has come from the mouth of God. We know that *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work* (2 Tim. 3:16-17): even genealogies.

As though preaching from a genealogy isn't difficult enough, Luke's genealogy as compared with Matthew's is riddled with textual and historical difficulties. The discussions and attempts to rectify these difficulties date back to the 3rd century. The fact that these discussions continue to this very day among scholars tells us that the answers are not that easy to come by. Therefore, I'm not about to stand up and tell you that I have figured it all out and have answered every question. What I will attempt to do is survey the difficulties so that we may be aware of what they are, share some possible solutions and perspectives that have been accepted by the church throughout the ages, and then focus our attention on some less debatable and more obvious observations derived from the text and hopefully we can all leave with some practical applications.

I would like to point out as I just mentioned the difficulties didn't really start among scholars until the 3rd century. It was not a point of contention ever mentioned in the Bible itself nor has it been proven to be a problem among the early church fathers for the first 200 or so years. The problem seems to grow the further away we get from the actual time and culture of the original discussion.

Dealing with the Difficulties

Most of the difficulties lie in the relationship Luke's genealogy has with Matthew's genealogy. There are what seems to be contradictions between the two genealogies, at least on the surface.

1. Joseph's Father- In Matthew it is Jacob and in Luke it is Heli.

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

The traditional and most probable explanation for this is that Matthew recorded Joseph's lineage whereas Luke is tracing Mary's. But, Doesn't the verse clearly say that Joseph was the son of Heli? Not necessarily. Let me propose a possibility that the Greek allows for. First of all, the structure of the first part of verse 23 is different than the rest of the genealogy. There is no definite article "the" when calling Jesus the son of Joseph. Also, the word "son" is used there but not in the rest of the genealogy where it is inferred. All that to say, it is possible to read the sentence like this; "Jesus Himself, supposedly Joseph's Son, was about thirty years old when He began His ministry being a Son of Heli." It was also custom not to include women in genealogies. It is safe to assume Luke was being more customary and traditional in his genealogy and Matthew was the one pushing the envelope.

2. Matthew goes back to Abraham but Luke goes all the way back to Adam and even God.

If we are correct to assume Matthew traced Joseph's lineage and Luke traced Mary's than it would make sense to say they had two different goals or purposes with their genealogies. To trace it back to Abraham through David would prove that he is the promised blessing to all nations through Abraham and rightfully so through the David line. But to trace it back to Adam through David would prove that Jesus was as human as anybody else ever born, yet still possessed the birthright to reign on David's throne.

It also makes sense that both genealogies were necessary. Matthew knew the Jews would expect a direct lineage to David through the father's line. And, by the inspiration

of the Holy Spirit, Luke knew we would all need a biological link to Adam, where we all meet.

3. The amount and accuracy of names that vary between the two genealogies

Matthew recorded 42 names and Luke recorded 77. Also, from David to Abraham the genealogy of Matthew and Luke are identical. But from David down, the names are different. This demonstrates that they each had a different purpose in recording the genealogies and it further bolsters the argument that its because they are two different genealogies; Mary's line and Joseph's line. And yes, it is amazing and providential that they both converge at David but through two separate sons.

There are also some difficulties with some of the names that Luke has recorded in his list but we are not going to get into those now. I will say that there are resources out there that do deal with those issues.

Conclusion to the difficulties:

What is at stake? The veracity of the Bible, which in turn brings God himself into question. If these genealogies are provable contradictions and errors, then we can all go home. However, If these were accusations brought into a court of law, it would not take much time to convince a non-biased jury that there is more than enough reasonable doubt. Although some of the assertions and explanations that have been put forth for centuries are not necessarily provable, they are certainly not disprovable either. There are enough possibilities to assume there are reasonable explanations.

Ironically, there are no accounts in the Bible where the genealogies nor the rightful claim of Jesus to the throne was ever challenged. You can challenge miracles because they relied heavily on eye witnesses, but you can't challenge the facts. Matthew and Luke both used public records to construct their genealogies and if they were in error, anyone could have proved it before 70AD.

Now lets focus our attention on what we do know the genealogies are teaching us.

1. Jesus is the Son of David

One fact that we can all agree on is that both genealogies connect Jesus to the David line, whether through Mary or Joseph.

Why is this so important? Jesus had to be of the line of David in order to fulfill many prophesies among which is 2 Samuel 7:12-13.

2 Samuel 7:12-13 When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his

kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

God promised David that he would raise up one of his sons to be a king that will rule an eternal kingdom. This king will be the king of all kings and the government shall be upon his shoulder. He will be the Prince of Peace. He will rule with justice and righteousness. This prophecy found its temporary fulfillment in King Solomon but it found its final and ultimate fulfillment in the Lord Jesus. God orchestrated this promise to hinge entirely on the fact the one who would fill this role must be a child of David and Jesus was just that. He was David's son through rightful lineage and biology.

There was another aspect of this prophecy that had to be fulfilled and that is the fact that if he was going to rule an "everlasting" kingdom, He would have to be an everlasting human. What man could fill this role? The God man.

2. Jesus is the Son of Man/Son of God (Human and Divine)

*Isaiah 9:-6-7 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.***

*7 Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, **on the throne of David** and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.*

Luke knew just how important this fact was. He recorded the words of the angel in 1:30-33 *"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. **31** And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. **32** 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, **33** and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."*

It would have been impossible for anyone to fake their way into fulfilling the role of God's chosen king. Even if they could have proved their rightful claim to the throne they would have died eventually and like all other kingdoms of the world, it would die eventually. But Jesus fills that role because of what we call his Hypostatic Union. This is a theological term that describes the union of Christ's humanity and divinity in one hypostasis, or individual personhood. This hypostatic union fulfills two critical prophetic themes in the Bible, his kingship (as we are discussing) and also his qualification as the perfect sacrifice to expiate or remove sin.

Why must Jesus be fully human and fully God? I'm going to let questions 16 and 17 from the Heidelberg Catechism help us answer that.

#16 Q: Why must he be a true and righteous man?

A: He must be a true man because the justice of God requires that the same human nature which has sinned should pay for sin. He must be a righteous man because one who himself is a sinner he cannot pay for others.

#17 Q: Why must he also be true God?

A: So that, by the power of his divinity, he might bear the weight of God's anger in his humanity and earn for us and restore to us righteousness and life.

3. Jesus is the Savior of the World

I'm going to leave our text in Luke and jump backwards to Matthew 1:21 to make this last point. I'm confident that if Luke were here he would agree that everything he has written so far and will write in the remainder of his gospel account is meant to bring every reader to this fact; Mary did bear a son and they did call his name Jesus and *Jesus will save his people from their sins*. Not try to save, hope to save, or almost save his people. He will save his people from their sins.

He accomplished the necessary work to save 100% of his people 2000 years ago on Calvary. Every drop of his blood was used to cover every sin his people ever committed, are committing, and will commit in the future. On that cross He paid it all and he said, "It is finished". That perfect work is still being applied to this very day to his people. The question is are you his? Are you one among his people? How can you know? If you stand here today believing that he died for you than you are his. If you stand here today not sure if you believe but know you are a sinner and need nothing more than for this to be true for you, than you are his. All you have left to do is pray and ask him to apply that blood to your sin.

CG Questions

1. Take some to recall some of the difficulties with Luke's genealogy as it relates to Matthew's and discuss some of the proposed solutions.
2. What are some reasons why we can trust the veracity and accuracy of the genealogies even though they do have some apparent difficulties?
3. If every word of Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for our teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness, how can Luke's genealogy contribute to that?
4. Based on the message, how can you see the gospel through Luke's genealogy?
5. Why is it important that Jesus be fully human?
6. Why is it important that Jesus be fully God?
7. How does the Hypostatic Union of Jesus affect his kingship?
8. How does the Hypostatic Union affect our walk with Jesus as Christians?

Daily Devotions - March 4-8

Mon, March 4th - Read Isaiah 9:6 Take some time to reflect on how Jesus has and is fulfilling his titles in the kingdom of God and your life personally. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Tues, March 5th - Jesus was not only God but he was fully human. This enables him to sympathize with us as humans. Read Hebrews 4:14-16 and contemplate the humanity of Jesus and how that offers you comfort.

Wed, March 6th - Read Matthew 1:21. Take some time to reflect on just how important the word “will” in the passage? How should this truth affect our faith?

Thurs, March 7th - Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Jesus told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. We know that Jesus meant he rules a spiritual kingdom that is currently filling the earth and will one day fill the new heavens and new earth. Take some time today to pray for the world we live in now as you contemplate the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Fri, March 8th - Take some time to read through Revelation 21:1-4 and reflect on what the consummated kingdom will be like.