



## **Luke 3:23–38**

23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph,

the son of Heli, 24 the son of Matthat,

the son of Levi, the son of Melki, 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 Se-  
mein,

the son of Josek, 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 Melki,  
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 Sime-  
on,

the son of Judah, the son of Joseph,  
the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,  
31 the son of Melea, the son of Men-

na,  
the son of Mattatha, the son of Na-  
than,  
the son of David, 32 the son of Jes-  
se,  
the son of Obed, the son of Boaz,  
the son of Salmon, the son of  
Nahshon,  
33 the son of Amminadab, the son  
of Ram,  
the son of Hezron, the son of Perez,  
the son of Judah, 34 the son of Ja-  
cob,  
the son of Isaac, the son of Abra-  
ham,  
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 Maha-  
lalel,  
the son of Kenan, 38 the son of  
Enosh,  
the son of Seth, the son of Adam,  
the son of God.

## **Reflection**

Today's passage comes from Luke 3:23–38, it contains the family tree of Jesus, likely following Mary's line, let me read it to you [reading from the above].

Well clearly that was hard work for me,

and perhaps you're worried that this is going to be hard work for you as well. Such a long list of indecipherable names! And that strong temptation to flick through this part of the Bible to get to the good stuff in the next chapter! If you're feeling this way, you and I can both be thankful that we aren't studying 1 Chronicles which begins with nine chapters of genealogies! And yet, we have in our hands the word of God in which not one letter is wasted. And so why nine chapters like this in Chronicles? Why in Luke's so carefully constructed, orderly account of the life of Jesus do we find this genealogy, this family tree, this long list of names?

The answer is that in the ancient world, and still in many modern cultures, one's ancestry was very important in terms of

their identity as a person. Take for example the Maori people of New Zealand. Many of them can tell you which of the original eight long canoes their ancestors arrived in when they first arrived in New Zealand between 800 and 1,000 years ago. Their family line is so important to them as a people, passed so carefully from father to son and mother to daughter, that there is every reason to suppose that this memory of family trees and origins is reasonably accurate. The Maori people's cultural identity is intrinsically linked to their cultural heritage. And in the ancient world, the Jews were particularly conscious of their ancestry. Through wars and exile and attempted genocide they clung to their memories and stories of ancestry as a lifeline, and especially because God had made some extraordinary promises to their founding

father Abraham and their greatest king David. Matthew's genealogy makes much of these promises, and of Jesus' kingly line, announcing loudly to the world that the king is now here in Jesus. In reading Matthew's genealogy we imagine father to son, father to daughter, year in year out for 1000 years, through war, and slavery, and exile, and persecution, a father saying to his children 'one day my son, God will send us his King, who'll save us, and rule on the throne of David forever;' 'one day my precious daughter, one day God will send us his King.' And a mother to her son, a mother to her daughter, 'don't fear my little ones, one day God will send us his King and he'll make everything right again.' The climax of Matthew's genealogy is that God's King has now finally ar-

rived in the person of Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

And there are elements of this in today's passage as well, but on the whole Luke's purposes are different to those of Matthew; they are much grander in scope than Matthew's focus on the Jewish nation. Where Matthew's genealogy begins with Abraham and the beginning of Israel, Luke traces his genealogy right back to Adam, to the beginning of all humanity. And in going right back to the beginning of the human race Luke expands the scope of Jesus' ministry to include the hopes of all. His genealogy ties all of humankind up into one unit. And their fate is wrapped up in Jesus. From heaven's perspective Jesus is the focal point of history, not the isolated hope of Israel but the culmina-

<sup>1</sup> Tom Wright, *Luke for Everyone*. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (Great Britain), 2014), 38–40.



tion of a line of descendants stretching through the patriarchs and kings of Israel right back to Adam. In Jesus lies not just the entire hope of the Old Testament but also the entire fate of all divinely created humans, the fate of the entire world.<sup>2</sup>

And the placement of Luke's genealogy only emphasizes this. In yesterday's passage at Jesus' baptism the heavens were torn open and God said of Jesus,

You are my Son

And then in today's passage we find Jesus' family tree, seventy-seven names and then an ending unique in ancient literature, seventy-seven 'the son of's' ending with 'the son of God.' And in doing this

<sup>2</sup> Darrell L. Bock, Luke (Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament; Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 1994), 360.

Luke invests Jesus' title 'son of God' with new and deeper meaning.

You see there has only ever been one other who could rightly be called 'the son of God' and his name was Adam. All of humankind are sons and daughters of Adam, but Adam was the only 'son of God'; because his line is not continuous – it was broken by the fall. No other man or woman has ever come into the world as a true son of God, for by Adam's sin every one of his descendants forfeited their sonship. No other man, that is, until Jesus. And in this he is the new Adam, the new hope of a fresh start for all of humankind through him. Michael Wilcock pictures this concept in these terms. Our present human existence is like a pit, in which all of us are trapped, for the sin of Adam has removed

any possibility of our climbing out into the upper world. Jesus is like us, in that he has come down into the same pit with us. But he is unlike us, in that while we are here because of *a fall in disobedience*, he is here because of *a descent in obedience*, and he has never let go of the rope which joins him to the world above. He is firmly anchored up there, in the unbroken relation of sonship with his Father. That is why his humanity is distinctive. That is why it is only by clinging to him that we can ever be lifted out of the pit. Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeds and through him offers the prospect of a fresh start, of being born again, of a new creation in him.<sup>3</sup>

## **Think & Pray**

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Luke: The Saviour of the World* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1997), 58

It's easy to get caught up in that swirl of names and lose the significance of the whole. Here we have all of humankind in representation. We know so little about each individual name but we can easily imagine each person's joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears, their cares and troubles, their schemes and plans, just like our own. In fact, you or I might as well add our name, the name of our father, grandfather and great grandfather to the list. We too are passing away, and will soon be gone. That's why we need Jesus, the hope for all of humankind. Jesus said,

18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. Rev 1:18

‘I am the resurrection and the life.  
The one who believes in me will live,  
even though they die; John 11:25

19 Before long, the world will not  
see me any more, but you will see  
me. Because I live, you also will live.  
John 14:19

Thank God today for Jesus, not just the  
hope of the Israelite nation, the hope of  
all humankind.