



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

What's In A Genealogy? (Luke 3:23-38)

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Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age,

Why Thirty Years of Age?

Jesus was not of a priestly line, being out of the line of Judah. John the Baptizer was in the priestly line and was probably “called” *about* the time he was 30 years of age. The historical significance being we are enabled to determine Jesus’ age at his baptism by virtue of his filial relationship to John. Jesus was “about” thirty when he was baptized.

being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

Genealogy

Interestingly, Matthew begins with a genealogy whereas Luke leaves it til later.

Why?

Well, in terms of speculation and possible considerations relative to canonicity, Matthew follows the last book of the Hebrew Canon, Chronicles, as the first book of the New Testament.

Again, speculation: assuming Matthew, in his grasp of Jesus’ teaching in the Upper room the last evening they were together, recalled the implicit statement they, the 11, would be recipients of additional revelation.

Again, speculation, but assuming Matthew was aware his writing was the first of the apostolic band, odds are it would be assigned first place in the new corpus (i.e. New Testament).

Such being the case, an obvious tie or link with the Old Testament would be necessary, therefore Matthew begins with a genealogy so as to be acceptable and/or plausible with the Jewish community.

We remember the Chronicles, written quite probably post-Babylonian captivity; begin with an extensive genealogical record. We also recall the restriction imposed on some of those who were among the initial returnees who were unable to establish a genealogical pedigree. All of which to say, genealogy was of supreme import to the Jewish mindset and, most significantly as it pertained to Messiah.

Luke, on the other hand, knowing genealogies mean little to nothing to Greeks leaves the genealogical issue til later when its significance would begin to be apparent.

In my opinion, Luke’s gospel is oriented not only historically, but apologetically.

We need to remember, a biblical “apologia” is a reasoned defense, and not what we consider an apology in our day. A reasoned defense. Whenever we “argue” as believers our objective is to present a “reasoned defense”. (A terrific example might be the Apostle Paul’s presentation on Mars Hill before the Stoics and Epicureans.¹)

Luke has to this point developed at least three attestations to Jesus’ Messianic credentials: 1) his virginal conception, 2) Simeon and Ann’s acknowledgment and, 3) the heavenly announcement at the baptism.

The genealogical record will now establish lineage not only from Abraham through David, but all the way back to Adam. This link to Adam suggests universality to Jesus’ mission and will later be incorporated into the revelation given to the Apostle Paul.

Application:

Given Peter’s admonition to the saints in the 1st century², that is: 1) sanctify Christ in your heart and, 2) be prepared to give an “apologia” for the reason of the hope that is in you—how competent do you consider yourself at this moment?

BIBLE STUDY

TUESDAY @ 8:00 A.M., ROOM 100 RYAN BUILDING

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What is it to “sanctify Christ in your heart”? The word “sanctify” is from the Greek verb *hagiadzo* meaning to **set apart**. It is in the imperative, meaning it is a command.

Where would you begin, and why? What would be your tack or focus?

Might I suggest a mundane example? Consider Christ and His word (and the words of His Apostolic band) as “square one” on your philosophical or apologetic reasoning checkerboard.

Begin with this assertion: The Bible is the Word of God, written. (A crass plug for the scripture memory system I suggested for acquisition! ☹️ 😊)

Luke's Tack:

Luke begins with Joseph, Jesus' supposed father and works back to Adam: present to past. In contrast, Matthew began with Abraham and worked forward: past to present. Luke's listing is far more extensive, given its scope. It seems plausible each listing is designed for easy memorization in differing contexts; Jewish and Gentile.

Neither listing is exhaustively chronological but jumps from generation to generation. Yet within each listing are items of necessary significance. Luke never mentions Mary in his listing yet within his gospel he devotes much attention to women. Matthew, in contrast and in seeming contravention of custom mentions four women, none of whom might be noted for virtue!

Whose Genealogical line: Mary or Joseph?

The contention of many is it is the genealogical line of Mary since Luke uses the phrase “being as was supposed-son of Joseph”. At the same time Matthew indicates Joseph's father as one Jacob descendant from Solomon through the lineage of Jeconiah (the one subsequently cursed) thereby providing a legal lineage though not a natural one.

Luke states Joseph's father as one Heli (Eli) descendant from Nathan, David's third son through Bathsheba and in so doing establishing a natural lineage from David.

The sum: the two lineages, i.e. Joseph's via Solomon and Mary's via Nathan provide the necessary credential for Messiah as David's son, naturally and legally.

There is a second opinion from the 3rd century:

A third century Bishop, Africanus, is reported by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical Histories*³ records as suggesting the following (my summary): Joseph's father, Jacob died childless. Jacob's father, Matthan had a brother Melchi though each was from a different mother... Matthan (out of Solomon's line) had Jacob and then died. Melchi (out of Nathan's line) marries Estha (Jacob's wife) and sires Eli (Heli). This makes Joseph, in one sense, a descendant of David through both lines.

To make it even somewhat more complicated, Matthew uses the term “began”⁴ whereas Luke simply says “the of”⁵. As you read the account in Luke's genealogy you note the word *son* is generally in italics, meaning the translators supplied the word for ease of reading. Legally, one could be known as “the of” *so and so* by virtue of adoption or marriage without being of a natural or biological generation.

Resolution

When we arrive in heaven there will be a number of lines we may want to join. One line will be labeled **The Genealogy Question** another **Cain's Wife**, another **The Days of Creation**.

I learned long ago, the scriptures answer my fundamental, non-negotiable questions, but not my curiosity.

The End of the Beginning

After 400 years of silence God intervenes to begin the process of introducing Messiah and bringing to maturity and reality what He had been demonstrating in shadow form through ethnic Israel over nearly a millennium (from Abraham to Jesus via ethnic Israel).

Luke, along with the other Gospel writers, is set to introduce us to this reality while setting the stage for Messiah's departure and the Spirit's subsequent contribution.

¹ Acts 17:16-34

² 1 Peter 3:15

³ Eusebius' Ecclesiastical Histories, Bk 1, ch. 7 (Baker, 1971 p 31-35)

⁴ Matt. 1:2ff

⁵ Luke 1:24-38