

Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany

January 14, 2025

Home Study: Luke 3:23-38

INTRODUCTION

Maybe you've seen the ads yourself. In recent years, various companies are able to provide you with a detailed report about your ancestry. These companies use DNA testing to give all sorts of information about your family history, personal identity, health data, and long-lost relatives. Some of these tests can apparently tell you not only where your ancestors are from, but also when they got there.

TODAY'S READING

In Bible times, a person's ancestry was passed along orally, or in a written record. Let's take a closer look at the genealogy of Jesus Christ, as recorded by St. Luke.

The Bible records genealogies for several important figures, and tracing family backgrounds was very important in ancient Jewish thinking. Two Gospel writers, Matthew and Luke, trace back the ancestry of Jesus Christ. It's interesting that there are significant differences between the two genealogies, and scholars have provided various satisfactory explanations for reconciling these differences. Suffice it to say that one of the genealogies seems to follow the line of Jesus' earthly father, Joseph, while the other genealogy seems to follow the line of Mary, our Lord's mother – but we can't be sure which is which. Both provide marvelous information about Jesus' ancestry, however.

Read Luke's version of the genealogy, in Luke 3:23-38.

What are your first impressions when you read this section? Did any names stand out, or surprise you?

Notice, in v. 23, that Luke mentions the age at which Jesus began his public ministry. Take note, also, the age of David when he became king (2 Samuel 5:4), and of Joseph when he began serving Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46).

If you're past that age, what were you doing at that same point in your own life? Have you ever wondered about what Jesus was doing for all those years prior, and why his public ministry began so many years after his birth? What do you suppose was God's plan in this timetable?

In v. 23, Luke comments regarding Jesus' connection with Joseph, that he was "supposed" to be Joseph's son. In his earlier chapters, Luke has told the incredible story of how the Son of God was conceived, by the Holy Spirit's work, in the womb of

a virgin. Having established Jesus' divine origins, Luke is now going on to clarify Jesus' human origins in the following genealogy.

Do you imagine that people in the first century AD had questions about whether Jesus was truly and fully divine? Or that he was truly and fully human? Do people today still question the Lord's origins?

Take note of three towering, all-important figures in the ancestry of Jesus. The connection to David identifies Jesus as the heir to the royal throne. The link to Abraham identifies Jesus with the national hopes and dreams of his people, along with the Old Testament covenants. The tie to Adam, Luke is suggesting, means that Jesus represents all of humanity. In the person of Jesus, God is carrying on the work he's been doing through the centuries since creation, as described in the Old Testament.

While every single generation isn't necessarily included in a Biblical ancestry list such as this one, Luke arranges his genealogy carefully. He records eleven lists of seven names, with very important names beginning some of these lists (David, Abraham, Enoch).

What's significant and unique about Enoch, in the story of God's people? Read Genesis 5:22-24 and Hebrews 11:5.

Why do you think it's significant that Luke tells us Jesus' final human ancestor is Adam? In what way(s) is it appropriate to say that Jesus is "the new Adam?" How did Adam fail in his relationship with God? While he was living on earth, did Jesus live out his relationship with God perfectly?

Jesus' genealogy reminds us that none of us are an island unto ourselves. Some of our ancestors were probably distinctive and accomplished, while others were complete unknowns. The same is true for Jesus. What a joy it is to know that he came for everyone, to bring salvation to every human. You and I have genealogies, too, as does every person on the planet; but the genealogy that makes an eternal difference for us is the one Luke records in today's reading.

PRAYER

Thanks and praise to you, eternal Father, for sending your Son into our human flesh to become one of us. I rejoice at the truth of Jesus' humanity, celebrate the amazing history of his ancestors, and marvel at the myriad of people you used to carry out your plan of salvation. Give me joy in being a part of your story, too, as I serve you humbly in my life. In the name of Jesus Christ, my Savior, I pray. Amen.