

Paternity, Maternity, and Eternity (Luke 3:23-38)

1. Whose genealogy is this?

Genealogies:

- The Jews preserved their genealogies with the utmost care and precision and had a remarkable accuracy of family history through the first century.
- Despite the Babylonian and Assyrian captivities, genealogies were kept “up to date” for two reasons:
 - They took pride in their heritage and nationality as the people of God.
 - While the people were unsure of the timing and details of the anticipated king and the Messiah, complete family history was preserved for a claim to the throne.
- Genealogies were both private and public. Copies remained in the family home and were also available to the public.
- Joseph and Mary would have possessed detailed genealogies, mainly because they both are from the “house of David” (Matt. 1:1, 6; Lk. 3:31-32).
- The only two genealogies in the New Testament in extensive detail are the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. While they are both comprehensive, there are many differences:
 - It is unusual to find extensive genealogies at the end of a narrative, as most list them in the beginning from past to present.
 - Matthew places his genealogy in typical Jewish fashion: in the beginning of the narrative from Abraham through Jesus Christ.
 - Luke inserts his genealogy at the end of chapter 3 and in a reversal order: from present to past: beginning with Jesus, ending with Adam.
 - The total number of names differs between Abraham and Jesus: Luke provides fifty-seven names, while Matthew gives us forty-one.
 - Between both genealogies, thirty-eight names are different.

The “dilemma” in reconciling both genealogies: Who is Jesus’ grandfather (Joseph’s father)? Matthew states that his name is “Jacob” (Matt. 1:16), while Luke says that it is “Heli” (Lk. 3:23). Three options:

A. This is the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph:

- Joseph became Heli’s son by *adoption*. While Joseph’s biological father is Jacob (Matt. 1:16), Heli “adopted” Joseph as his son after marrying Mary. This could only occur if Mary did not have any brothers, as Joseph would be “grafted” into the family tree as a “son” of Heli because of the absence of any biological sons.
- Jacob and Heli were brothers, and upon Jacob’s death, Heli assumed the role of levirate marriage and fathered Joseph. Some Jewish historians claim that James, Jesus’ half-brother, provided this information.

Problem: there is no extensive historical data to argue for or against this.

B. This is the genealogy of Jesus through Mary:

- Jesus is “supposed” to be the son of Joseph. The reader knows that Jesus is not the biological son of Joseph.
- In Greek, there is no article for Jesus as “the” son “of Joseph, which indicates that Joseph is in a different “class” than all of the other biological fathers from v.24-38.

Problem: for this maternal (female) genealogy to belong to Mary would be unprecedented, as every other genealogy is paternal (male).

C. We cannot reconcile the differences because of the lack of data:

- Jewish and Gentile readers in the first century would have been able to reconcile this.
- Problem: there are reasonable solutions to this “supposed” dilemma.

*This is most likely the genealogy of Mary, for she has been the central figure (1:46-55; 2:16-19; 2:39). Additionally, the genealogy from David to Solomon and Nathan fits well with Luke’s theme (1 Chron. 3:1-9).

2. Why does this genealogy matter?

- Luke postpones his genealogy until after the heavenly announcement to inform the reader what we already know: Jesus is the Son of God (1:32, 35; 2:11, 49).
- Luke traces Jesus to David’s son, Nathan. Jesus’ kingly “blood” is not through Solomon but through Nathan, who is also a son of David. He is not arguing for Jesus’ “kingship” but wants to show that Jesus represents humanity since Adam.

Both Mary and Joseph are descendants of Adam, Abraham, and David, and each shares a unique blessing and privilege from each family line since David.

How can Adam and Jesus both be called “son of God”?

- These are the only two men who have been given the freedom to choose to sin or choose not to sin. They both share similar human nature (pre-Fall with Adam).
- Adam did not have a biological human father: neither did Jesus.
- God supernaturally formed Adam’s body from dust and breathed life into him (Gen. 2:6-7). The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary (Lk. 1:35).
- Both represent categories of humanity: Adam, as the first man, and Jesus, as the second.

How are Adam and Jesus of Nazareth different from one another as the “son of God”?

- Jesus is both the son of God and the son of Adam in two ways: He is human and divine.
- Adam, as the son of God, sinned and broke fellowship with God. This new “son of God” must not be after the last “son of God” because the first “son of God” sinned.
- While Adam came into existence in body and spirit on the 6th day, the Son has eternally existed as God in spirit. It was only through the incarnation that He added a human body, and with that human body, a human nature, without original sin.
- Jesus is the true King and representative of both God and man, as truly God and truly man. Jesus’ humanity has a double claim: His genealogy in David establishes His regal heirship while His connection to Adam demonstrates His humanity.
- Jesus of Nazareth represents both God and man:
 - God: He is God and has eternally existed as God the Son.
 - Man: He has obeyed perfectly for the past 30 years without sin.

The Father is eternally and temporally pleased with His Son, Jesus of Nazareth. This genealogy demonstrates the humanity of Jesus in a different “kind” than Adam, the Son of God.

Points of Application: