



The unfolding of your words gives light.

To Seek and to Save

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke

²³When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age^a, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph^b, the son of Eli,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 Hesli, 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 Salmon, the son of Nahshon^c,³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, 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 Heber, 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

^a **3:23 When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age.** Luke does not give us the precise age of Jesus because that information is not important to the message. The word translated “about” is common to compare things. It was used in Luke 9:14 to approximate the number of men in the multitude Jesus fed and in Luke 22:41 to describe the distance Jesus walked away from the disciples before He prayed (“about a stone’s throw”).

Here it is possible that Luke is comparing Jesus’ earthly ministry to that of an Aaronic priest, who could begin serving at the temple altar at age 30 (Numbers 4:3). See my note on Luke 3:21.

^b **3:23 being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph.** Compare this to Matthew’s genealogy, where Jesus’ lineage is traced to Abraham. Another difference is the line between David and Jesus. Matthew says Jesus came from David’s son Solomon but Luke says He came from David’s son Nathan. Here is where most of the discussion on this text centers.

It does not take even a close observation to see that Matthew and Luke give an entirely different list of names between David and Joseph. Here are some explanations that have been attempted to explain the difficulty:

- Because many Hebrews were known by two names, Luke gives the alternate names. This is a pretty weak argument.
- Mary’s father Heli, having no sons, adopted Joseph as his son, as in other cases where a man had no biological son (Num 32:41; Ezra 2:61; Neh 7:63).
- Joseph’s mother’s first husband died before bearing children, so another relative married her and fathered Joseph in his “brother’s” name. So one one the genealogies traces Joseph’s physical descendants back to David and the other his legal descendants. This is called levirate marriage and is detailed in Deuteronomy 25:5-10.
- Matthew gives Joseph’s genealogy while Luke gives Mary’s.

^c **3:32 the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon.** Salmon was a tribal leader of Judah in the days of the fall of Jericho. Matthew alerts us to the fact that Salmon had in fact married Rahab the harlot.

The Gospel of Luke
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son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God^{a, b}

^a **3:38 the son of Adam, the son of God.** Luke found a creative way to stop the list at the One Who had no beginning. Here you see the Son of Man and the Son of God. The humanity of Christ is vital because spirits do not die. Jesus died for men because He is a man.

^b **3:23-38** Luke and other New Testament writers anticipated questions about Jesus by answering them before they were raised. What right does He have to His claims? What is His family line? Is He a sinner like us? How could He be called a priest when He is not from the line of Aaron?

Unlike Matthew's list that goes back to Abraham, Luke's genealogy goes back to creation. It illustrates for us that Jesus came for people from every tribe, tongue and nation (although Matthew inserts the names of some women of other-than-Hebrew descent).

God does not waste characters and every word of His is important. This means that we should pay attention even to obscure texts that include genealogies. Here are some good reasons to pay attention to this list of names:

1. It makes you do blue-collar Bible study. Luke called the people of Berea "noble-minded" because they searched the Scriptures for answers to their questions. This is not an easy text, but it forces you to mine for treasure.
2. It shows you that God uses individuals. Most of the characters on Luke's list are mentioned nowhere else in the Bible or any other credible history. What does that tell you? People matter to God because He uses them to bring Himself glory.
3. It demonstrates that the Son of God is also the Son of Man. Luke sets Jesus apart from mythical figures. He is a real man. He experienced hunger, thirst, pain, relational rejection and was tempted in all the areas you are tempted. But He never sinned. He is not some alien, but one of us.

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