

Luke 3:21-38 7-15-18  
**The Family Tree of Jesus**

We begin this morning with some poetry – of sorts. It is a poem called, *I Am My Own Grandpa*. Hmm! How does that work? Follow closely:

Many many years ago when I was twenty three,  
I got married to a widow who was pretty as could be.  
This widow had a grown-up daughter who had hair of red.  
My father fell in love with her, and soon the two were wed.  
This made my dad my son-in-law and changed my very life.  
My daughter was my mother, for she was my father's wife.  
To complicate the matters worse, although it brought me joy,  
I soon became the father of a bouncing baby boy.  
My little baby then became a brother-in-law to dad and so became my Uncle,  
Though it made me very sad.  
For if he was my uncle, then that also made him brother  
To the widow's grown-up daughter who, of course, was my step-mother.  
Father's wife then had a son, who kept them on the run.  
And he became my grandson, for he was my daughter's son.  
My wife is now my mother's mother and it makes me blue.  
Because, although she is my wife, she's my grandmother too.  
If my wife is my grandmother, then I am her grandchild.  
And every time I think of it, it simply drives me wild.  
For now I have become the strangest case you ever saw.  
As the husband of my grandmother, I am my own grandpa!

Anybody here have a family tree as complicated as that? Can anybody here trace their family tree back 78 generations? Well, that is what we have here in the gospel of Luke, the very long family tree of Jesus. Luke 3:**21-38** *Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, 22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."* 23 *When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, 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, 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 son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

Wow! What an inspiration huh? Who here has this passage committed to memory? Anybody? Some of us wonder why God's book would include such information. Fact is, the Bible is, in large measure, a history book. Genealogies are important for history. And, fact is that the Bible is, in large measure, a Jewish book. Genealogies are or were very important for the Jews. I know our brother Rich Hayden is something of a genealogist. Maybe you are too. Maybe your family has one. Any famous people in your family tree? Huh? Anybody? My wife claims that she is related to Colonel David, Davy Crockett, which I think is pretty cool because Crockett, with some help from Walt Disney and Fess Parker, was one of my childhood heroes. The opportunity to marry into Crockett's family line was something I could not pass up. Last week I said I married Beth to ensure that she would pray for me, but the Crockett connection was also a big selling point. But seriously, in the context of all Scripture, a genealogy for Jesus is utterly vital. If it be true as is claimed, that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the promised Messiah, then He must have a particular family background as set forth in prophecy. Jesus and his apostles regularly appealed to the Old Testament to defend the claims of Christ, and the Old Testament said the Christ would be from which tribe - which of Jacob's twelve sons? Judah. Then, even more specifically, He must be the descendant of David the king. So, a genealogy for Christ serves as a supporting argument for the Messiahship of Jesus. Jesus had the necessary family tree and Luke wants us to know.

Now, there are two genealogies of Christ in the New Testament. One here and one in Matthew. They are not the same. But the differences are easily explained and, in fact, are

instructive. One difference is that Matthew traces the lineage only back to Abraham. Luke goes all the way back to Adam. But even between Abraham and Christ there is a different number of names and, well, the inclusion or deletion of names is the prerogative of the genealogist. Now that brings up an important point. Biblical genealogies are not necessarily complete and they are not intended to be. Bishop Ussher, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, calculated the date of creation from the Biblical genealogies and concluded that the earth was formed in 4004 BC, on October 23, at around 6:00 p.m. I do not know if that was Eastern or Central time. But, the genealogies Ussher used to get that date are probably not even close to exhaustive. They are summary lists, highlighting the prominent figures in the lineal descent.

Now, the major conflict between Matthew and Luke is in the list between David and Jesus where they are quite different. Their difference may be easily explained in either of two ways. Many claim that Matthew gives the genealogy through Joseph while Luke gives it through Mary. Jewish genealogies were normally traced through the fathers, but since Joseph was not actually the father of Jesus, it is possible that Luke did his differently for that reason.

Another explanation of the difference is that Luke gives the blood line and Matthew gives the royal line. That is, Luke gives the genuine progenitors but Matthew shows how the right to the throne came down to Joseph and then Jesus. In Matthew, Joseph's father is Jacob. In Luke, he is Eli. By this explanation, Eli is Joseph's real dad, but Joseph gets the royal line because Jacob had no sons, making his nephew Joseph heir to the supposed throne of David. Now this view that Matthew gives the royal and Luke the blood-line makes perfect sense when you consider that Matthew is written primarily for Jews and presents Jesus as King of the Jews. Luke is written primarily for Gentiles and presents Jesus as Savior of the world. So, Matthew gives the royal line. Luke gives the blood line.

Now that I have some of you totally confused let's go on to see how we can profit from this genealogy. Luke gives us 78 names, but this meditation has only three points. The first is that Jesus is the Son of God. Woah! Luke just gave us a list of his human roots and I begin by saying this shows he is the son of God? Absolutely. This whole thing is brought up right after God has just made it clear that Jesus is His son. Go back to the baptism account. **22b** *A voice came out of heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."* I don't think that was Joseph talking. The implication is that God himself was speaking and Luke the historian doesn't question that. Instead he supports it by saying Jesus was *supposedly* the son of Joseph. *Supposedly*. Superman was supposedly the son of Pa and Ma Kent, but we know better, don't we? We know he came from

Jor-El and Lara of the planet Krypton. He was only *supposedly* from the Kent family. In Luke 4 Jesus pays a visit to his hometown of Nazareth and we read this Luke 4:22 *All were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, "Is this not Joseph's son?"* Supposedly. But He is really the son of God. Strange, but true. You know the Christmas story, how the angel came to Mary and Luke 1:35 *The angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.* Joseph had nothing to do with it. Jesus is the miracle child. He is the God-man and this passage in Luke displays both of these elements. Jesus is truly God. He is truly man. Jesus is the God-man and, as such, He bridges the gap between God and man. He bridges Creator and Creation. Jesus is the Son of God but I expect you knew that, so let's move on.

Secondly, we see that God uses messed-up people for His good purposes. A few notes about the persons in this genealogy. You might think God would have used only the purest of the pure to be in the family line of the Messiah. Not so. Look first at some of the men. You know about David, the adulterer. You know about Abraham who lied more than once out of fear. Maybe you don't know about Judah mentioned in verse 33. He was given to indulging himself with prostitutes. His son, Perez, was the son of unknowing incest. What kind of family tree is that? It is a corrupt tree. At least it had those unsavory elements.

If you look to the wives and mothers behind these men you see even more impurity of various sorts. Matthew mentions four women in this family tree – all were outcasts of some form or other. The first is Tamar, the mother of Perez. Was Judah her husband? Not exactly. Genesis 38:6-7 *Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. 7 But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord took his life.* This means Tamar is a widow and a childless one. That was an unbearable state for a Jewish woman at that time so Tamar did a little family planning 13-16 *It was told to Tamar, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." 14 So she removed her widow's garments and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah...15 When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face. 16 So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.* What kind of woman is this Tamar? Deceptive, immoral, incestuous. She's in the messianic line and so is the fruit of her sin – her son Perez who resulted from his mother's deceit and his grandpa's immorality.

Back in Luke 3 now so I can introduce you to our next lady. Verse 32 speaks of Salmon who had a son by a woman named Rahab. Remember her? She protected the Hebrew spies when they were in Jericho. What was her business before she married Salmon? She was a prostitute, and a Gentile to boot. But look, from that prostitute came Boaz, whom we know to have been a godly man and eventually came Jesus the Christ.

Now, Rahab's son Boaz had a boy named Obed through a lady named Ruth, another outcast. What do I mean? Ruth was a lovely lady. Got a book of the Bible named after her – no harlotry, no incest. But was she Jewish? No. She was, remember, a Moabitess. She came from that nation that was a terrible enemy of God's people, the family of Moab, who himself was the product of incest. In spite of that God demonstrated His grace by choosing this lady born in a nation that was cursed in the book of Deuteronomy, whose people were barred from the temple of God.

One more female friend you should know about and this one had a son, Nathan, who is mentioned in verse 31. Her name is Bathsheba. Bathsheba was not only guilty of indecent exposure, immodesty, but also adultery committed with King David.

Of these four women, there are two harlots, a Gentile Moabitess and an adulteress. What do you think the message is? *Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.* The message is that God is a God of grace. He uses messed up people, outcast, rejected people for His good purposes, for His redemptive plan. Are you glad of that like I am?

This genealogy is a real crusher to the pride of the Hebrew purebred. In Eastern cultures your bloodline is crucial. America is a peculiar place in that regard. We like the self-made man, the Lincoln who started out in a log cabin, the son of nobodies. But in most places amid times in the world your mom and dad determined your personal worth. And to a first-century Jew it was very, very important. They were very much into being God's special people. They were glad that Gentiles were excluded, so when they heard that the alleged Messiah's line had harlots and Gentiles they must have been shocked or incredulous. But the message of Luke is *Jesus, the Savior of the world!* by whom the grace of God falls on and flows through Gentiles as well as Jews.

Finally, from our genealogy we see that our God keeps His promises. There are two men in the family tree of Jesus who were told by God that one of their descendants would be the great Savior-King. There was David who met with God and heard this from Him. II Samuel 7:**12-13** *When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish His kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever.* One of David's

descendants will be an eternal king. God promised. David's name does not appear in the genealogy by accident. Some 900 years before Christ God had promised this to David and in the fullness of time God brought it to pass. He kept his promise to David by means of his greater grandson, Jesus.

The next man of interest is Abraham. Genesis 12:**1-3** *Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; 2 and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; 3 and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."* **3c** *In you all the families of the earth will be blessed.* How would this ever be? It certainly didn't happen in Abraham's lifetime. The Lord clears it up somewhat when he says to Abraham in Genesis 22:**18** *In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.* Abraham is to have an offspring, a seed, who will bring blessing to every nation. Now to the New Testament. Galatians 3:**16** *Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.* In Christ, we see God's word fulfilled. In his descendant, Jesus, Abraham does become a blessing to all the earth. God has kept his promise to Abraham.

Look now at Genesis 3. The genealogy in Luke takes us all the way back to Adam so let's you and I go back there. After Satan has successfully tempted Eve, God has a promise for Satan. For Satan? Yes. Satan too has his Jesus-person pocket promise book, but his is a negative promise. **15** *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.* God says there will be conflict between one called *the seed of the woman* and the fallen angel known as *Satan*. Satan will bruise His heel. That is, he will inflict a temporary wound upon this seed of the woman, but the woman's seed will bruise Satan's head and that represents a fatal blow, a permanent defeat. This is done by one called *the seed of the woman*. Another name for that person is *Jesus* who deals the death blow to Satan, but what is this *seed of woman* business? Why not *the seed of man*? Luke 3:**23** *When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph.* Supposedly, not really. In one who has no earthly father, God has kept his promise to Satan, which is indirectly a promise to us all.

So, this genealogy of Christ establishes the trustworthiness of God. He does what He says He will do. This genealogy establishes the truthfulness of the Scriptures. This messianic line begins at Adam's son Seth and weaves its way throughout Biblical history. Written by many men over

three thousand years, it all holds together as one essential whole. Genesis explains Luke, Luke explains Genesis. Who can tell the wonders of God's blessed word?! No man could have done this. That is why we believe the Bible to have a divine origin. It is a work of God who not only plans but directs the whole story and the written account of it on the stage of human history.

We discover then a God who keeps His promises – no matter how impossible those promises seem to be. What has God promised you? Your daily bread? His continual presence? God promised Abraham many descendants from a barren wife. He promised David an eternal kingdom. Nothing is too tough for the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, when He promises true joy for His children who trust Him, you can be sure He will deliver. When God promises eternal life and forgiveness to those who repent and believe in Christ, He will deliver according to his word. You can stand on the promises of God. You can build your life right there and be confident.

I know a tough problem for us is that question of what lies beyond the grave. Deep within us is a burning need to know. Guesses don't cut it. We want something more in the face of oblivion. In the presence of the tomb we want to know whether eternal life is a reality or not. Our God has said it is real, that in Christ we have an inheritance reserved for us and He has shown Himself to be forever true. Maybe you have seen the bumper sticker that says, *God said it, I believe it, that settles it*. Nice, but too wordy. *God said it, **that** settles it*. When He gives you a promise you can take it to the bank and live off the interest.

So, stand on the promises of God when Satan attacks. Stand on the promises of God when trials come. Stand on the promises of God when temptation wrenches your soul. Stand on the promises of God when the enemy fills your ears with lies. Stand on the promises of God when the world mocks. Stand on the promises of God when you are weary and you wonder if it's all worth it. Stand on the promises of a God whose word never has, and never ever will fail us.