

# Luke 3:23-38

## The Eternal Purpose of God

May 5, 2024

### 1. Intro

- a. So, one of the things you all might not know about my sister, is that she is REALLY good at researching the ancestry of our family
  - i. Over the years, she has spent a lot of time and effort looking through online records, finding out all sorts of interesting facts about our family's ancestors
    1. There aren't too many family gatherings where she is not showing us all a picture of a long-lost great aunt or cousin, and sharing with us all things that we had no clue about!
      - a. One interesting fact is that, on my mom's side, we are related to Milford Davis, who used to be a prominent businessman right here in Sapulpa
        - i. In fact, Davis Park, just down the road on Taft, was named after Uncle Milford
      - b. Supposedly, if I'm not mistaken, we are also distantly related to Jefferson Davis, who served as the first and only president of the Confederate States back in the 1860's
        - i. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing...
      - c. But one of my favorite facts that Carliegh has discovered is that apparently there is a Butters Castle in Scotland that we might have ties to on my dad's side of the family
        - i. So, just be forewarned, if this castle ever gets passed down to the Butters family of Tulsa, OK, we're packing up our kilts and heading to Scotland!
    - ii. Genealogies are fascinating things to research in our day...
      1. But, to be honest, there's not a whole lot riding on who my great-great-great grandfather was on my mom's side, or on my dad's side
        - a. Who these men were really has no bearing at all on my life today
      2. But this is not the case for the genealogies in the Scriptures
        - a. And it is most definitely NOT the case for the genealogies that are tied to the Lord Jesus, which is where we find ourselves this morning
          - i. So let's look together at Luke 3:23-38

### 2. Luke 23-38

- a. *<sup>23</sup>Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, <sup>24</sup>the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, <sup>25</sup>the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, <sup>26</sup>the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, <sup>27</sup>the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, <sup>28</sup>the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, <sup>29</sup>the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, <sup>30</sup>the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, <sup>31</sup>the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, <sup>32</sup>the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, <sup>33</sup>the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, <sup>34</sup>the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, <sup>35</sup>the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, <sup>36</sup>the son of Cainan,*

*the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, <sup>37</sup>the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, <sup>38</sup>the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.*

- i. I have no idea if I pronounced all those names correctly
  1. But as one of my professors said, “Just say the name quickly and with confidence, and you’ll be just fine!”
- ii. Well, that was a LOT of names, wasn’t it?
  1. In fact, including Jesus, Luke gives us a list of 77 generations of men
    - a. Many of these names we know absolutely nothing about
    - b. Some, more toward the end, we know a LOT about
      - i. Men like David and Boaz and Judah
      - ii. Men like Jacob and Isaac and Abraham
      - iii. And of course, men like Noah and Adam
    - c. But is that all this passage is for us?
      - i. Just a bunch of names?
        1. Should we approach the genealogies of the Scriptures in the same way that we approach our own genealogies, just skimming over them quickly so we can get to the “good parts” of the Bible?
- iii. R.C. Sproul, when he came to this passage in Luke 3 during his preaching at his church, had this to say...
  1. “One of the problems attending expository preaching is that we’re not at liberty to choose what texts we read or preach from, but we must follow the text, and perhaps the most disconcerting and challenging of all are the genealogies, such as you’ve just heard. However, this genealogy is there FOR A REASON. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. It is HIS word, and it is profitable for OUR instruction, reproof, and teaching in righteousness. It is ALL part of that deposit of truth that the Lord God has given to His people.”
    - a. That’s familiar language to us, isn’t it?
      - i. As the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3, God has given to us ALL of His holy Scriptures – including the genealogies – so that the men and women of God may be COMPLETE... equipped for EVERY good work
        1. That is my prayer for us this morning, is that God would use these words and names of Luke 3 to bring US more to completion
          - a. And that through this genealogy, we might be EQUIPPED for EVERY good work God has created us for!
3. So the first thing that we want to note about this passage is that Luke makes it a point to say in verse 23 that, “Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age...”
  - a. So why 30?
    - i. As we saw a few weeks ago, even at the age of 12, Jesus was a VERY capable teacher of his Father’s Word
      1. So why wouldn’t he have started his ministry at 18? Or 21? Or 25?
        - a. Why spend almost 3 decades in obscurity in Nazareth, when he very clearly had a HUGE mission that he had been sent to accomplish?
          - i. Well, if we look to our Old Testament, we actually find that there is biblical precedent for the significance of the age of 30

1. In Genesis 41, we read that, after Joseph had spent many years in exile and slavery, and even in prison, that he was exalted into the service of Pharaoh... at the age of thirty years old
  2. In Numbers 4, we read that all the Priests and the Levites, who had spent their entire lives in slavery in Egypt, would now enter into the service and ministry of the Tabernacle... at the age of thirty years old
  3. And in 2 Samuel 5, we read that David, after spending many years on the run from King Saul, was now anointed the King over all of Israel... at the age of thirty years old
- b. Joseph, who served as a type of Christ for us, as he modeled the Suffering Servant who was to come
  - c. The Priests and Levites, who served as forerunners of the great High Priest who was to come
  - d. And David, the anointed king of all of Israel, from whose line the TRUE King would come
    - i. All of these men entered into their divinely appointed roles at the age of 30
    - ii. As did Jesus, our Lord and Savior
      1. There was nothing accidental about God's timing in all of this!
4. But now, as we move into the actual genealogy that Luke gives us in the following verses, we immediately encounter all sorts of potential issues
- a. In fact, those who would seek to disprove the authenticity of the Scriptures often point to this passage as a key piece of evidence in the unreliability of the Bible
    - i. The reason why is, if you place Luke's genealogy side-by-side with Matthew's genealogy, you will see VERY quickly that these two genealogies have MASSIVE differences
      1. Our problems start immediately when we see that Luke names Joseph's father as Heli, while Matthew names Joseph's father as Jacob
        - a. Just so you know, even in the original Greek these names sound NOTHING alike, so it's not like they're interchangeable
      2. As we go on in Luke's account, we also find a whole host of names that we have no idea at all who they are
        - a. But in Matthew's account, we recognize familiar names from Israel's return from exile, and even a list of kings we know from 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles
          - i. Kings like Josiah, and Hezekiah, and Ahaz and Uzziah
            1. But again, none of these names are found in Luke's account
      3. Even more startling is that, when we get closer to the time of David, Matthew takes the expected route of tracing Jesus' line through Solomon
        - a. But Luke instead takes us through David's son, Nathan
          - i. This is major problem if you're familiar with the Davidic Covenant, because God clearly promises that it is through Solomon that the Covenant will continue
      4. Add to all of this the fact that Matthew only includes 42 generations, while Luke includes a whopping 77 generations...
        - a. Matthew includes various women in his list, while Luke doesn't include any...
        - b. And Matthew stops his genealogy at Abraham, where Luke takes his genealogy all the way back to Adam...

- i. So, how in the world do we reconcile these apparent contradictions?
    - ii. How do we answer the skeptic who looks at all of this and says, “See, your biblical authors can’t even agree on a family tree for Jesus!”?
  - b. There are actually a couple of different explanations that can account for these differences, so we’ll attempt to unpack those this morning – without getting too technical!
- 5. The first way that scholars have attempted to explain these differences is that Matthew is providing a LEGAL account of Jesus’ ancestors, while Luke is providing a BIOLOGICAL account
  - a. Or, another way to express this is that Matthew is giving us Jesus’ genealogy through Joseph, but Luke is actually giving us Jesus’ genealogy through Mary
    - i. If you think about the intended audiences of these two Gospels, this does make sense
      - 1. We know that Matthew wrote his Gospel more for a Jewish audience, and so his desire would be to show that Jesus is their long-awaited Jewish Messiah
        - a. For the Jews, it was of utmost importance that the Messiah come from the line of David – specifically through the line of KINGS that came after David
        - b. As Matthew was tracing Joseph’s line of ancestors, he had to make sure that this line was clearly shown as a ROYAL line
          - i. This provided the LEGAL justification for Jesus being the true king of the Jews
            - 1. So therefore, for Matthew’s purposes, Jesus’ line HAD TO BE traced through Joseph’s descendants
          - ii. It was also very important for Matthew’s audience to see that Jesus was the promised seed of Abraham, the fulfillment of the Covenant given specifically to Abraham back in Genesis 12, 15, and 17
          - iii. So, again, for the purposes that Matthew was seeking to accomplish, the pinnacle of his family tree only needed to go as far as Father Abraham
      - 2. But Luke, on the other hand, if you’ll remember... is a Gentile
        - a. Not only was he a Gentile, but his audience, Most Excellent Theophilus, was also a Gentile
        - b. Luke certainly does not downplay Jesus’ Jewish heritage AT ALL in his Gospel account
          - i. But for Luke, it was VERY important that he show Theophilus that Jesus did not come JUST for the Jew, but also for the Gentile
            - 1. And so Luke makes it a point to say in verse 23 that Jesus was only SUPPOSEDLY the son of Joseph
              - a. But in reality, Jesus was the Son of GOD, conceived in Mary’s womb through the power of the Holy Spirit
              - b. If you think about it, this is consistent with how Luke has handled Joseph up to this point...
                - i. Luke doesn’t talk about the angel visiting Joseph to tell him not to divorce Mary
                - ii. Luke doesn’t mention Gabriel warning Joseph to take his family and flee to Egypt
                - iii. Luke’s whole point in bringing up Jesus as a 12-year-old boy in the Temple seems to be to emphasize that Jesus’ TRUE Father is not Joseph, but God
                - iv. So Luke does seem to be moving Joseph to the background in his Gospel

- c. And so, the argument goes, Luke instead traces MARY's ancestral line, which, while it ultimately does go through David, takes a different route to get there
    - i. The way this is explained is that, in the Greek language of those days, there wasn't an adequate term for "son-in-law"
    - ii. Instead, the son-in-law was just regarded as the "son" of the father-in-law
      - 1. So it is believed that Heli was actually Mary's dad, not Joseph's
      - 2. If this is the case, then this would allow for the fact that Luke's genealogy does not go through Solomon and all of the following kings of Judah, but instead through Nathan, and a bunch of guys we do not know
  - d. Luke was not providing the LEGAL argument for Jesus' family tree, but instead, the BIOLOGICAL account... through Mary
  - ii. And again, because Luke wanted to make a point that Jesus was not just for the Jews, but FOR THE WORLD, he doesn't stop his genealogy at Abraham, but instead goes all the way back to Adam, the son of God formed out of the dust in the Garden
    - 1. Now, just to be clear, this argument cannot be supported with 100% certainty
      - a. But I do think it provides a pretty compelling explanation for the differences in these two accounts!
6. The second argument that has been used to account for the differences in the two genealogies goes back to an Old Testament practice known as Levirate Marriages
- a. Back in Deuteronomy 25:5-6, we read this law that God gives to His people...
    - i. *<sup>5</sup>If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. <sup>6</sup>And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.*
      - 1. So, according to this law, if a woman's husband dies without any sons, then the husband's brother must basically take her to be his wife
        - a. However, if a son is born afterwards to that woman, the son will take on the name of the FIRST husband, so that his name won't disappear out of Israel
          - i. For us, this is a VERY strange practice
          - ii. But for the people of Israel, this was the way God had ordained it in order to preserve their distinct family lines
      - 2. And we actually see in Matthew 22 that this practice – or at least the idea of it – was still around even in Jesus' day
        - a. In Matthew 22:23-28, Matthew tells us this...
          - i. *<sup>23</sup>The same day Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, <sup>24</sup>saying, "Teacher, Moses said, 'If a man dies having no children, his brother must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother.' <sup>25</sup>Now there were seven brothers among us. The first married and died, and having no offspring left his wife to his brother. <sup>26</sup>So too the second and third, down to the seventh. <sup>27</sup>After them all, the woman died. <sup>28</sup>In the resurrection, therefore, of the seven, whose wife will she be? For they all had her."*
        - b. Jesus goes on to tell them that their question shows that they don't understand the Scriptures or the power of God...

- i. But the point is that this practice of Levirate Marriage was still known in that day
    - ii. So the argument for Luke's differences in his genealogical account goes like this...
      - 1. When he went and did his in-depth research of Jesus' lineage, he must have discovered that many of these men from Matthew's account actually died before fathering sons
        - a. But, because of the practice of Levirate Marriages, the brothers of these men fulfilled their obligation to their brothers' wives, and their names continued through the sons born to them later
          - i. So just for example, Matthew lists Jacob as Joseph's father
            - 1. But maybe Jacob died before he had any sons, and so Jacob's brother, Heli, took Joseph's mother to be his wife, and Joseph was born to them later
            - 2. So BIOLOGICALLY, Joseph was born to Heli
              - a. But LEGALLY, because it was a Levirate Marriage, it was JACOB's name that continued through Joseph
                - i. Hopefully that all makes sense!
      - 2. So this idea of Levirate Marriage does give a possible explanation for the differences in Matthew and Luke's accounts
        - a. But I would have to say that this argument does not seem as strong as the argument that Luke is tracing Mary's line
          - i. When you look at the MANY differences in names between the two accounts, that's a LOT of Levirate Marriages that would have had to taken place
            - 1. Maybe it was more common than we realize
            - 2. But again, the first argument, in my mind, seems more plausible
              - a. But I would encourage you to do your own research, and see what conclusion you come to!
  - iii. In the end though, the authority and reliability of the Scriptures DOES NOT rise or fall on our ability to reconcile these two apparent differences
    - 1. As Matthew Henry reminds us in his commentary, both the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of Matthew were accepted as true and accurate VERY early on in the church
      - a. If they had seen these two accounts as contradictory, there is no way that they would have ever been entered into the canon of the Bible
        - i. The reality is, they must have understood fully the different approaches that Matthew and Luke were taking
        - ii. And they accepted both as TRUTH
          - 1. And, as Henry also notes, its entirely possible that the records used by both Matthew and Luke to take their unique approaches were lost to us when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD
      - 2. But with a little work, we can still stand very strongly upon the fact that the Bible is fully authoritative, and the Bible is fully INERRANT
- b. Well, this is all great information... hopefully its as interesting to you as it is to me!
  - i. But again, what's the point?
    - 1. We may have a better understanding of why Luke ordered these things the way he did, but aren't we still just left with a bunch of names?

- a. Back to Paul's words to Timothy, how is all of this profitable for our teaching? Or for our reproof? Or our correction? Or our training in righteousness?
  - b. How does this passage serve to make us more complete in Christ?
  - c. How does it equip us to do the good works God has created us for?
- 7. We've already hinted at the answer to these questions earlier, and that is the fact that Luke's account of Jesus' family tree makes it clear that he was NOT just a Messiah for the Jews, but he was a Messiah for the entire world!
  - a. We might look at 34-38 as Luke just tacking on a few extra names to Matthew's genealogy
    - i. But the theological implications of these five verses are extraordinary
      - 1. Yes, Jesus was absolutely the fulfillment of God's covenant with David, that from David's line there would come a King who would rule over all other kings
      - 2. Yes, Jesus was absolutely the fulfillment of God's covenant with Moses and Israel, that he would become the TRUE Israel, the only TRUE Son capable of upholding the laws of God
      - 3. And yes, Jesus was absolutely the fulfillment of God's covenant with Abraham, that Abraham's seed would be forever blessed by God as His chosen and beloved
        - a. But, according to verse 34, Jesus was ALSO the seed of Terah and Nahor, pagan men who died in pagan lands
        - b. Jesus was also the seed of Serug and Reu and Peleg, and of Eber and Shelah and Cainan, and Arphaxad and Shem and Noah
          - i. All of these men came BEFORE the Abrahamic Covenant that would set aside the chosen nation of Israel
            - 1. As is the case for all those that Luke names all the way back to Adam
            - 2. Luke is showing us in his genealogical account that Jesus would not just be the New David, or the New Moses, or the New Abraham
    - ii. Jesus was the New ADAM
      - 1. Where Adam gave into the temptations of the serpent in the Garden...
        - a. We'll see next week that Jesus will have victory over Satan's temptations in the wilderness
      - 2. Where Adam rebelled against the one command of God to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...
        - a. Jesus would humbly submit to EVERY command of his Father, taking on the form of a servant, and becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross
      - 3. Where Adam would plunge the world into sin and death...
        - a. Jesus would bring freedom, and LIFE!
  - b. And because he is not just the new Abraham, but he is also the New Adam, WE – all of us Gentiles – are now able to be reconciled to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!
    - i. This is an incredible aspect of the salvation that Christ has secured for us
    - ii. And it is also one of Paul's main purposes in writing the book of Romans
      - 1. It is clear from this letter that Paul never discounted the significance of the people of Israel
        - a. In Romans 9:1-5, Paul writes,
          - i. *<sup>1</sup>I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— <sup>2</sup>that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my*

*kinsmen according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup>They are Israelites, and TO THEM belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. <sup>5</sup>TO THEM belong the patriarchs, and FROM THEIR RACE, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*

- b. Paul understood the biblical truth that, through Abraham, God chose for Himself a people out of the world
  - i. And it was to THE ISRAELITES that God showed His glory
  - ii. It was to THE ISRAELITES that God gave His law
  - iii. It was to THE ISRAELITES that God gave so many of His Covenants
  - iv. And it was from THE ISRAELITES that Christ came into this world
    - 1. And so Paul was in terrible sorrow that his kinsmen were cut off from Jesus because of the hardness of their hearts
- c. But at the same time, Paul is also VERY clear in the next verse when he says, "It is not as though the word of God has failed!"
- c. Paul goes on in the rest of chapter 9, and chapters 10 and 11 to show that this is ALL part of God's glorious, eternal purpose for His creation!
  - i. God chose Israel, and raised them up for His glory
  - ii. But, when the fullness of time had come, God ALSO hardened the hearts of Israel, in order that the Gentiles might be adopted into His family – all through the coming of His Son, Jesus
    - 1. And this ALSO would be for HIS glory
      - a. In Romans 9:22-26, Paul writes,
        - i. *<sup>22</sup>What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup>in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— <sup>24</sup>even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? <sup>25</sup>As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" <sup>26</sup>"And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"*
    - 2. Friends, according to the eternal purposes of God, a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in
      - a. Those who WERE NOT His people... you and me... God now calls His people
      - b. Those who WERE NOT beloved by Him... you and me... God now calls beloved
- iii. Luke understood these things well, maybe more than many others
  - 1. For again, Luke was a Gentile
  - 2. More than that, he was a close friend of Paul's
    - a. So he got to hear these truths preached over and over and over again as Paul preached the Gospel to the Gentiles
    - b. And therefore, when it came time to write his account of the life of Jesus, Luke DID NOT stop his genealogy at Abraham
      - i. Luke followed Jesus' line all the way back to Adam
      - ii. For Christ is the NEW Adam!
        - 1. Though sin and death came into the world through the first Adam, the son of God born from the dust...
        - 2. Justification and LIFE has come through the second Adam, the son of God born of Mary, conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit



- iv. And, after Christ returns and makes all things new...
- v. When the great masses of the saved are standing around the throne of God in worship...
  - 1. It will not just be the chosen people of Israel in that great worship service
    - a. It will be ALL those who the Lord Jesus has purchased with his blood
    - b. It will be people from EVERY tribe and EVERY tongue and EVERY nation, as we proclaim,
      - i. *“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”*
- vi. So what is the application for this study on Luke’s genealogy of Jesus Christ?
  - 1. The application is to GO and make disciples of ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that Christ has commanded us
    - a. For Christ has come to save a people for himself from all nations
    - b. And he has entrusted us, the church, to go out and get them
      - i. May we answer this great and worthy calling with everything that we have!

## 8. The Lord’s Supper

- a. Time of prayer and self-examination
- b. Gather for the bread and juice (music playing in the background)
- c. 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
  - i. <sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup>and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” <sup>25</sup>In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.