

## WHAT IS YOUR PEDIGREE?

### Luke 3:23-38

(MEV) "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, who was the son of Heli,<sup>24</sup> who was the son of Matthat, who was the son of Levi, who was the son of Melchi, who was the son of Jannai, who was the son of Joseph,<sup>25</sup> who was the son of Mattathias, who was the son of Amos, who was the son of Nahum, who was the son of Esli, who was the son of Naggai,<sup>26</sup> who was the son of Maath, who was the son of Mattathias, who was the son of Semein, who was the son of Josech, who was the son of Joda,<sup>27</sup> who was the son of Joanan, who was the son of Rhesa, who was the son of ZERUBBABEL, who was the son of Shealtiel, who was the son of Neri,<sup>28</sup> who was the son of Melchi, who was the son of Addi, who was the son of Cosam, who was the son of Elmadam, who was the son of Er,<sup>29</sup> who was the son of Joshua, who was the son of Eliezer, who was the son of Jorim, who was the son of Matthat, who was the son of Levi,<sup>30</sup> who was the son of Simeon, who was the son of Judah, who was the son of Joseph, who was the son of Jonan, who was the son of Eliakim,<sup>31</sup> who was the son of Melea, who was the son of Menna, who was the son of Mattatha, who was the son of Nathan, who was the son of DAVID,<sup>32</sup> who was the son of Jesse, who was the son of Obed, who was the son of Boaz, who was the son of Salmon, who was the son of Nahshon,<sup>33</sup> who was the son of Amminadab, who was the son of Ram, who was the son of Hezron, who was the son of Perez, who was the son of JUDAH,<sup>34</sup> who was the son of Jacob, who was the son of Isaac, who was the son of ABRAHAM, who was the son of Terah, who was the son of Nahor,<sup>35</sup> who was the son of Serug, who was the son of Reu, who was the son of Peleg, who was the son of Eber, who was the son of Shelah,<sup>36</sup> who was the son of Cainan, who was the son of Arphaxad, who was the son of Shem, who was the son of NOAH, who was the son of Lamech,<sup>37</sup> who was the son of Methuselah, who was the son of Enoch, who was the son of Jared, who was the son of Mahalalel, who was the son of Cainan,<sup>38</sup> who was the son of Enosh, who was the son of Seth, who was the son of ADAM, who was the son of God."

## INTRODUCTION

What is your pedigree? "Pedigree" can refer to the origin or history of an institution or idea. The "pedigree" of hospitals, for example, can be traced to the rise of Christianity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century after becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire. Or, one's own "pedigree" can refer to a register of a line of ancestors; one's family tree. Or, it can be a genealogical record, especially of a purebred animal. Or, "pedigree" can describe the distinguished, excellent, or pure ancestry of a particular individual.

There's a joke about an American sent by his company on a buying tour of Europe. He was excessively proud that one of his ancestors affixed his name to the Declaration of Independence. A salesman called while the buyer was signing a number of checks, adding many a curve and flourish to his signature. The salesman became impatient waiting for the buyer to acknowledge his presence. He spoke up, "You have a fine signature, Mr. (So-and-So)." "Yes," admitted the buyer, "I should have. One of my forefathers signed the Declaration of Independence." "So?" said the salesman. He shifted to his most Jewish-German dialect to comment, "Vell, you got nottings on me. Vone of my forefadders signed the Ten Commandments."

In societies with status based upon ancestry, such as 1<sup>st</sup>-century Israel into which **Jesus** was born, or the Daughters of the American Revolution, genealogies serve the crucial function of determining if a person is qualified for membership in a kinship group or a ruling class. Luke chooses the pivotal moment between **Jesus** publicly committing Himself at His baptism to carry out His God-ordained role as the Messiah, and the start of His ministry to prove He is indeed the "Savior, who is Christ the Lord," as prophesied at His birth (**Luke 2:11**), to present **Jesus'** bona fides. Luke demonstrates **Jesus** possesses the proper heritage to be God's Messiah: the One God chose, sent, and anointed to atone for our sins, to safeguard us from God's judgment, and to secure our privilege to inherit everlasting joys in the home of **Jesus'** Heavenly Father. Our two Outline points are the Pedigree of **Jesus Christ** and the Pedigree of a follower of **Jesus Christ**.

## I. THE PEDIGREE OF JESUS CHRIST

Matthew, a tax collector and record keeper (**Matthew 9:9**), begins his account of **Jesus'** pedigree in **Matthew 1:1** (ESV): "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." The Greek word translated "genealogy" is *genesis*, which means "origin," "beginning," "ancestry," or "birth." *Genesis*, the first book of our Bible, derives its name from the Septuagint, the oldest Greek translation of Jewish Scripture dating to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B. C. In essence, Matthew is presenting us with **Jesus'** Royal Birth-Book. Matthew traces **Jesus'** *royal pedigree* through Israel's line of official Kings dating to David. He then further traces the official ancestry of David (and **Jesus**) to Abraham, the father of the Jewish race. All Jews believed that when the Messiah appeared, he would be the "Son of David," as **Jesus** is often called in **Matthew** and the other Gospels, to fulfill God's promise to David of **II Samuel 7:12-16**.

While Matthew limits **Jesus'** pedigree to 41 ancestors, Luke cites 76 forebears, 38 of which are not named by Matthew. Luke even traces some ancestors through different lines. The apparent discrepancies between **Matthew** and **Luke** are not because Luke gives us Mary's lineage. Tracing ancestry through **Jesus'** earthly mother would have been contrary to all Jewish tradition. This possibility was not even suggested until A. D. 1490. As if to guard against this notion, Luke omits *all* women in his record, contrary to Matthew, though Luke gives the most prominence to women of any Gospel writer. To reconcile these two genealogies, it's best to assume Luke presents Jesus' *legal* or *physical pedigree*, taking into account ancestors whose actions forfeited their legal right to be in David's line, regardless of their royal ties.

Luke presents us with two key facts about **Jesus** in **vs. 23**: "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph." "As was supposed" translates a Greek word most often meaning, "an assumption wrongly made." As Luke already made decisively clear to his readers, **Jesus** was conceived in Mary as a virgin by "the power of the Most High" through the "Holy Spirit," which guaranteed His pedigree as "the Son of God," not "the son of Joseph" (**Luke 1:26-38**).

The way Luke draws **Jesus'** genealogy to a close in **vs. 38** is rich with meaning: "the son of Adam, who was the son of God." Luke emphasizes **Jesus** shares in the humanity of all the human race as a "son of Adam." Luke also points to **Jesus** sharing with Adam a reality true of no other human beings: God alone is their immediate Father, which makes them both, in a sense, "the son of God." "The first Adam" fulfilled his role as "the first man" by generating human birth at the beginning of God's Earthly creation. **Jesus** fulfilled His role by regenerating us with "a new birth" (**James 1:18**) that is the beginning of preparing us for God's Heavenly creation. Paul made these very points in **I Corinthians 15:45-49** (GNT), with Luke at his side, just 5-7 years before Luke set down his Gospel: "For the scripture says, 'The first man, Adam, was created a living being' [**Genesis 2:7**]; but the last Adam is the life-giving Spirit.<sup>46</sup> It is not the spiritual that comes first, but the physical, and then the spiritual.<sup>47</sup> The first Adam, made of earth, came from the earth; the second Adam came from heaven.<sup>48</sup> Those who belong to the earth are like the one who was made of earth; those who are of heaven are like the One who came from heaven.<sup>49</sup> Just as we wear the likeness of the man made of earth, so we will wear the likeness of the Man from heaven." **Jesus**, as the eternal Son of God, came to earth to be the obedient "last Adam" to undo the potentially damning ruin brought on the human race by the disobedience of the "first Adam."

Ronald Reagan (1911-2004) served as our nations' 40<sup>th</sup> President, 1981-89. His great-grandfather, Michael O'Regan, was born in Ballyporeen, County Tipperary, Ireland. On St. Patrick's Day in 1988, President Reagan paid a surprise visit to Pat Troy's Irish pub in Alexandria, VA. He spoke off-the-cuff to the crowd. "When I was a little boy, my father proudly told me that the Irish built the jails in this country," he said, pausing expertly, "then proceeded to fill them." Despite pride in his Irish ancestry, Ronald Reagan was fully aware of the damage done to people of all ethnic heritage by our common ancestor, Adam, which can only be undone by the redemptive power available to us by connecting us to a common Savior.

The second key fact Luke gives us in **vs. 23** is: "Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age." This age is approximate. The date markers Luke gives us in **3:1-2** and **Jesus'** birth occurring a year or more before Herod's death in 4 B. C. allow **Jesus** to have been 31-36 years old at this time. Much more important than puzzling over **Jesus'** precise age at the start of His ministry is the question, "Why did 'the Son of God' (**Luke 1:35**), named by angels as 'Jesus because He will save His people from their sins' (**Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31**), spend most of His first 30 years in obscurity in Nazareth, when God 'the Father . . . sent his Son to be the Savior of the world' (**I John 4:14**)?"

Let's prompt our response to this question by another question: Suppose **Jesus** had been miraculously created from the dust as a fully grown man in His prime, as was Adam, with no prior history or experience as a human being? Would He have had as much credibility when He claimed the authority to correct all false views of what it means to, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind," and to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (**Matthew 22:35-40**)? By being born as a normal child and living 30+ years facing the normal challenges of life in common with us all, **Jesus** learned by experience the responsibilities of family life towards parents and siblings, the demands of gaining an education and earning a living, and the obligations toward His neighbors, community, and country. **Jesus** also had opportunity to live out His own teachings on loving God and others, and to demonstrate the perfect selfless obedience and faithfulness to our Creator's will that qualified Him to offer Himself in sacrifice to satisfy God's justice so grievously violated by the selfish disobedience and betrayal of the first Adam.

## I. THE PEDIGREE OF A FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST

The Bible commands us to honor our obligations to our immediate or biological family. As Paul writes in **Ephesians 6:2-3**, "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise,<sup>3</sup> so that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life in the land" (citing **Exodus 20:12**). Paul adds in **I Timothy 5:8** (NLT): "[T]hose who won't care for their relatives, especially those in their own household, have denied the true faith. Such people are worse than unbelievers." But there's been a rise in recent decades of an obsession with tracing family trees. Someone calls such genealogical interest, "A perverse preoccupation of those who seek to demonstrate that their forebears were better people than they are."

Chauncey Depew (1834-1928) served as U. S. Senator from New York from 1899 to 1911. During a speech in the Senate on Hawaiian affairs, Senator Depew used the occasion to spoof those who placed too much stock in their supposed "blue blood" just by being born into a family of the highest social class. The famed English explorer Captain James Cook may have been the first European to visit Hawaii when he discovered these islands in 1778 and named them after his friend, the Earl of Sandwich. Cook was killed by the natives on his third visit to the islands in 1779. Queen Liliuokalani of the Sandwich Islands went to England in 1887 during the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria and was received at Buckingham Palace. In the course of remarks between the two queens, Queen Liliuokalani claimed she had "English blood" in her veins. "How so?" inquired Victoria. The Hawaiian queen replied, "My ancestors ate Captain Cook."

Rick Warren is founding pastor of Saddleback Church of southern California. It has grown to over 200 ministries at 11 locations and 20,000 average weekly attendance. Warren writes, "Our families on Earth are wonderful gifts from God, but they are temporary and fragile, often broken by divorce, distance, old age, and, inevitably, by death. The family of God includes all believers in the past, the present, and the future. Your spiritual family is even more important than your physical family because it will last forever. When we place our faith in Christ, God becomes our Father, we become His children, other believers become our brothers and sisters, & the church becomes our spiritual family. Jesus pointed to his disciples and said, 'These are My mother and brothers. Anyone who does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother!' (**Matthew 12:49-50**, NLT). Charles Stanley, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA, writes, "The moment someone chooses to trust in Jesus Christ, his sins are wiped away, and he is adopted into God's family. That individual is set apart as a child of God, with a sacred purpose."

## CONCLUSION

David, Israel's shepherd-warrior who endured years of pursuit and danger prior to being crowned King, penned these words of **Psalms 27:10, 12-14** (NET): "Even if my father and mother abandoned me, the LORD would take me in. <sup>12</sup>Do not turn me over to my enemies, for false witnesses who want to destroy me testify against me. <sup>13</sup>Where would I be if I did not believe I would experience the LORD's favor in the land of the living? <sup>14</sup>Rely on the LORD! Be strong and confident! Rely on the LORD!"

In 2001, Hawa Ahmed, a Muslim student in North Africa, experienced the power and comfort of these words. After reading a Christian tract in her dormitory, Hawa embraced **Jesus** as her Savior. Her father was an Emir (Islamic ruler). She expected to lose her inheritance by converting to Christianity, but she was totally unprepared for all that happened. When she told her family she'd become a Christian and changed her name to Faith, her father exploded in rage. Her father and brothers stripped her naked and bound her to a chair fixed to a metal plate to electrocute her. Faith asked them at least to lay a Bible in her lap. Her father said, "If you want to die together with your false religion, so be it." One of her brothers added, "That will show your religion is powerless." They had bound her, but she was able to stretch out a finger to touch a corner of the Bible. She immediately felt a strange peace, as if someone supportive stood beside her. Her father and brothers then pushed the plug into the socket. Nothing happened. They tried four times using various electrical cables, but it was as though the electricity refused to flow. Finally her father, angry and frustrated, hit her and screamed, "You are no longer my daughter." He then threw her into the street naked.

Faith ran through the streets, humiliated and in pain. People looked at her, more curious than shocked, which mystified Faith even more. Shaking and tearful, she ran to a friend's house who let her in, clothed her, and gave her shelter. The next day, this friend asked her neighbors what they thought when they saw Faith running naked through the streets. "What are you talking about?" they asked. "The girl had a wonderful white dress on. We asked ourselves why someone so beautifully clothed had to run through the streets." There's no other explanation than God hid her nakedness by clothing her in a stunning white dress! Faith has lovingly served **Jesus** for years as a full-time evangelist with Every Home for Christ. "Even if my father and mother abandoned me, the LORD would take me in. Where would I be if I did not believe I would experience the LORD's favor in the land of the living? Be strong and confident! Rely on the LORD!"