

# Genealogies and Jesus

## *The gospel told in names*

### Sermon Questions

1. Have you ever wondered why there are genealogies (lists of names) in the Bible? (Yes/No)
2. The book of 1 Chronicles starts with \_\_\_\_\_ chapters of genealogies!
3. What three opening observations can we make about genealogies in general:
  - i. The \_\_\_\_\_ is history.
  - ii. Genealogies serve a \_\_\_\_\_.
  - iii. Discrepancies can \_\_\_\_\_.

**Purpose I: Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_.**

4. David is *not* prominent in Luke besides this list of names. (Yes/No)
5. Luke's genealogy doesn't include Judah's kings after David because of God's judgment (Yes/No).

**Purpose II: Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_.**

6. The promises given to Abraham were not referring to \_\_\_\_\_ but to \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The blessing to the world through Abraham is \_\_\_\_\_ and salvation in his name.
8. The first genealogy to the last one here is record of anticipation of God's Messiah. (Yes/No)

**Purpose III. Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_.**

9. Adam and Christ share the title "son of God" and are both called "Adam/man." (Yes/No)
10. How does the image of a tree, with this genealogy as the trunk help us?

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## Genealogy Contradictions?

In comparing the genealogies in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, the differences are immediately recognizable. How can Matthew list Joseph's father as Jacob and Luke list Joseph's father as Eli? Is this an error in the Bible? We know both Luke and Matthew were careful historians, and guided by the Spirit of God, so how could they disagree on Joseph's father considering they were the following generation and had even interacted with Joseph's other sons and daughters?

As you can imagine, this isn't a new question. The early church also wrestled with this and have given us good answers (e.g., one proposed by Africanus, in the third century, as cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7). They suggested that (1) Joseph's true lineage is given by Matthew and what we see in Luke is actually Mary's lineage. This seems supported by the emphasis on Mary in the gospel of Luke, and also the note that Joseph was the supposed father of Jesus—leaving us to ask about the nature of his heritage through the virgin Mary. They also suggested that (2) there was a levirate marriage at one or more points in the line. In a levirate marriage, "The widow of a childless man could marry his brother so that a child of the second marriage could legally be considered as the son of the deceased man in order to perpetuate his name" (Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 861). See also Deut 25:5–10; cf. Ruth 4:1–10.

Africanus proposed that Jacob and Heli shared the same mother but different fathers. Being half-brothers, if Heli died childless, Jacob would marry his widow and have children in his brother's name. In a genealogy, a child could be listed under his natural or his legal father.

A more recent suggestion (and a better one in my estimation) is that Mary's father (Heli) had no son, and so when Mary married Joseph, he adopted Joseph to be his heir and carry on the family line since he had no male heir (see Ezra 2:61 = Neh 7:63; Num 32:41 cf. 1 Chr 2:21–22, 34–35; Num 27:3–8). Thus, Jesus was legal a descendent of Heli, but naturally a descendent of Jacob.

We don't have enough information to know for sure, but both are possible and common in the ancient world. It's good to keep in mind that it's not every day that a historian needs to write a genealogy for the Son of God who came into the world by a virgin birth.

## Discussion/Meditation Questions

1. How important is an historical Adam to the gospel and genealogies in general?
2. Read Galatians 3. How does the arguments in that chapter relate to the genealogy in Luke 3? What role does physical descent play now that Christ has come?
3. Read Isaiah 11 and notice the emphasis on the reign of Christ. How is Christ reigning today? How does this relate to the gospel? Why does Paul call it the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 24:11; Acts 28:31).