

AUTHENTICATING JESUS

Context: Luke-Acts highlights God's salvific plan and explains how Jew and Gentile could end up as equals in a Spirit-empowered community. In order to sustain the wobbly faith of the God-Lover (Theophilus), Luke crafted a careful historical account to explain how this "Jesus" who was crucified and resurrected 30 years before was part and parcel of God's plan for the salvation of all and to explain what it means to respond and commit to Jesus. Luke presented evidence through Zacharias and Elizabeth, angels and shepherds, Simeon and Anna, Mary and Joseph for the divine foretelling of the Messiah's coming. Through the ministry of John the Baptist and with the confirmation of Jesus' baptism by the Holy Spirit and God the Father, Luke set the stage for Jesus Christ, the Messiah, through whom "all men shall see God's salvation." Now, Luke presents the beginnings of Jesus' ministry and genealogy to authenticate Him as both the Son of God and the son of Adam (the Messiah): a universal perspective by His identification with the whole human race.

Life Principle: You too can become a child of God as well as a child of Adam through a "new" beginning by your acceptance of Jesus Christ as your divinely ordained Lord and Savior (Luke 3:23, 38).

I. Authentication with Beginnings of Ministry (3:23)

Beginnings are important to Luke and he notes them regularly. The beginning of Jesus' ministry follows His baptism, as the Spirit's coming and the Father's endorsement of His ministry mark out Jesus' messianic call. The age of thirty has been taken as symbolic of the appropriate age for the beginning of service, since many OT offices could be filled at that age (e.g., priesthood, Num. 4:3; age of Joseph on entry into Pharaoh's service, Gen. 41:46; age of Ezekiel when called to ministry, Ezek. 1:1; and age of David when he started reigning, 2 Sam. 5:4). The age of thirty, though approximate, connects Jesus with OT notables and, in part, authenticates the beginning of His ministry as the Messiah.

2. Authentication through Beginnings of Ancestry (3:38)

Jesus' genealogy ties all humankind whose fate is wrapped up in Jesus into one unit. His ministry represents the focal point of human history. The introduction of Jesus' genealogy right before the commencement of His ministry serves to highlight the scope of Jesus' concern for humans. It points to a universal perspective. He is neither an isolated historical figure nor a mythological legend, but the culmination of a line of descendants stretching back through the great men of promise like Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. The lineage confirms His position and suggests His ministry's comprehensive character. In Him, the entire hope of OT is inseparably and eternally bound. In Him, as well, the fate of all divinely created humans, both Jew and Gentile, is bound together.

Study Questions:

1. Word Study. The Greek word, ἀρχόμενος [archomenos] used by Luke in 3:23 is a present participle literally translated: "And Jesus Himself was beginning about thirty years." The LXX uses the noun form of this word in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God[.]" Using Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary, look up other uses of this word or a root of it in Luke's writings. HINT: Luke 1:2; Acts 11:15; 26:4. What significance, if any, do you find in Luke-Acts to the use of this word?

2. Genealogy. The genealogies of Matthew (1:1-17) and Luke (3:22-38) present interesting correlational challenges and require substantial historical research. For a fascinating and more detailed discussion on Jesus' genealogy, you can search one of the following URL's: www.complete-bible-genealogy.com, www.newadvent.org, or www.lifeofchrist.com. Do you think that the genealogical data presented by Matthew or Luke has historical value, theological importance, neither, or both? What did you learn about the nature of Jewish genealogies?

3. Doctrinal Statement. Article IV of GracePoint's Doctrinal Statement declares: "We believe in and confess the Lord Jesus Christ, the second person of the tri-unity, as the only mediator between a holy and just God and a radically fallen and unjust humanity. He, who is eternally and fully God, became truly man, for us and for our salvation, being conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He revealed the Father to us as the very Word of God." What evidence do you find in Luke 1-3 which authenticates Jesus as the Messiah? As fully and eternally God? As truly a human? As conceived by the Holy Spirit? Reread these three chapters concentrating on what Luke tells us specifically about the answer to this question: "Who is this 'Jesus'?"

Transformation Exercise:

Meditate on Luke 3:38: "Jesus . . . the son of Adam, the son of God." Contemplate the fact that you, as a child of Adam, are also a child of God. You have a genealogical beginning with God who, not natural selection, is the first cause of your biological existence, and you have (or can have) a spiritual beginning into God's family by your choice to accept the grace of God through Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Why not accept the grace?