

ENGAGE

- As you approach the text you may find these thoughts to be helpful?
 - We will be looking at the witness of the Spirit, the lineage of Mary, the lineage through Joseph and our personal witness of Jesus as King, Priest, Messiah, God and Savior.
 - I will be spending time on the Baptism of Jesus and briefly on Baptism by Fire.
 - Focus on the power of witness. The witness of Scripture, the witness of church history and our own personal witness
 - Consider Acts 1:8 and Revelation 12:11 when discussing the power of our personal witness.

EXAMINE

Now it came to pass, when all the people were baptized, that, Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.—Luke 3:21-22.

1. The Baptism of our Lord was the first event of His public life as the Christ; and on this account alone it would have a peculiar significance and importance. Previously to this time He had lain hid in Galilee, in silent and secret preparation for His public work, dwelling beneath the roof of His earthly parents, and subject to them, growing year by year in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man. What were His occupations and pursuits; how His soul within Him was exercised and disciplined in the prospect of the public duties assigned to Him as Mediator; in what way the one thought of glorifying His Father by “obedience unto death” for His people was ever before His mind, waxing in greatness and awfulness as it was longer and more fully contemplated; how the coming events of His temptation and agony and Cross filled His holy human heart with longing and wonder and fear as the time drew on and they looked the nearer, we have not anywhere in Scripture been clearly informed. The thirty years that elapsed between His birth and His “showing unto Israel” are for us little else than a mysterious blank. We can do no more than conjecture how His human understanding, by the aid of the Old Testament Scriptures, which spoke of Him in type and prophecy and promise, grew in the knowledge of the great work given Him to do; and how His human feelings of faith and love, and submission to His Father, by acts of converse with God in private, were disciplined and strengthened to enter upon it. It is but a glimpse that we get of the extent to which the Child Jesus had, during His early years, perfected Himself in the Word of His God, when we see Him, at twelve years of age, sitting among the Jewish Doctors in the Temple, the Teacher rather than the taught; and we can only guess by way of inference how large a portion of His private hours

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in youth was spent in secret communion with His Father, when we read of how the habit had grown in mature age into the spending of whole nights alone in prayer to God.

But although comparative darkness has been allowed to settle down upon the history of the earthly life of Christ before He grew to manhood, yet we can hardly err in believing that by means of these two things—namely, God speaking to His human soul in the written Word, and His human soul holding converse with God in prayer—He was educated for the work in public which lay before Him; and that, although we may know but little of the character or the successive steps of it, yet there was a great work of preparation going on in those early years, of which no record is found in Scripture. And when this mysterious preparation was at an end—when the hidden discipline of His early years had made perfect the Son of God for His destined enterprise—what was the event which terminated His secret and inaugurated His public career; which closed up the history of Jesus as a private man, and proclaimed the opening of His official life as the Messiah, the sent of God? We have the narrative of that event in the passage before us.

2. The first meeting of Jesus and John is a unique scene. They were of nearly the same age; they were related according to the flesh; they were both men of prophetic endowment, sent to produce in their native country a religious reformation. Yet, in spite of these and other points of resemblance, there could not have been two characters more absolutely contrasted. Jesus marked the contrast in the broadest way when He subsequently said, “John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!” John was the child of the desert, courting solitude and avoiding human society; Jesus followed a homely trade, appeared at marriages and feasts, was a friend of women and children, and was as much at home in the busy city as on the mountain top. John called the multitude out to the desert to hear him and did not condescend to visit the haunts of men; Jesus went to sinners where He could find them, considering it His duty to seek as well as to save that which was lost. John had a seared look; he was a man who, after severe struggles, had obtained the mastery of himself and was holding down a coarse nature by main force; Jesus, on the contrary, was always innocent and spontaneous, genial and serene. John, in short, was the Old Testament personified, Jesus the embodiment of the New; and in John’s shrinking from baptizing Jesus, the spirit of the Old Testament—the spirit of law, wrath and austerity—was doing homage to the spirit of the New Testament—the spirit of freedom and of love.

3. The application by Jesus for baptism perplexed John; and it is a perplexity even to this day. It is not, indeed, entirely without parallel in the life of Christ; for His circumcision, which took place when He was eight days old, raises the same difficulty. The difficulty is that He should have participated in an ordinance which symbolized the removal of sin. But in this case it is more urgent, because He made the application Himself.

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Only two explanations seem really to touch the quick. The one is that John's baptism had a positive as well as a negative side. It was not only the baptism of repentance, but a rite of dedication. It was a renewal of the national covenant, the inauguration of a new era, the gateway of the Kingdom of God. Now, although Jesus had no part in the sin from which baptism cleansed, He had part in this positive enthusiasm; He was the very Person to lead the way into the new era. The other explanation, which may very easily be combined with this one, is that He received baptism as a representative Person. Although sinless Himself, He was a member of a sinful nation, of whose sin He was keenly conscious—more so than any other whom John baptized—and He went along with the rest of the nation in making confession. In short, He was in this act rehearsing beforehand the great act of His death, when He bore in His own body on the tree the sins of the world.

Tintoret has thrown into his picture of the Baptism of Christ his utmost strength; and it becomes noble in his hands by his most singularly imaginative expression, not only of the immediate fact, but of the whole train of thought of which it is suggestive; and by his considering the Baptism not only as the submission of Christ to the fulfilment of all righteousness, but as the opening of the earthly struggle with the prince of the powers of the air, which instantly beginning in the temptation, ended only on the Cross. The river flows fiercely under the shadow of a great rock. From its opposite shore, thickets of close gloomy foliage rise against the rolling chasm of heaven, through which breaks the brightness of the descending Spirit. Across these, dividing them asunder, is stretched a horizontal floor of flaky cloud, on which stand the hosts of heaven, Christ kneels upon the water, and does not sink; the figure of St. John is indistinct, but close beside his raised right arm there is a spectre in the black shade; the Fiend, harpy-shaped, hardly seen, glares down upon Christ with eyes of fire, waiting his time. Beneath this figure there comes out of the mist a dark hand, the arm unseen, extended to a net in the river, the spars of which are in the shape of a cross. Behind this the roots and under stems of the trees are cut away by the cloud, and beneath it, and through them, is seen a vision of wild, melancholy, boundless light, the sweep of the desert; and the figure of Christ is seen therein alone, with His arms lifted as in supplication or ecstasy, borne of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted of the Devil.¹ [Note: Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (Works, iv. 268).]

I The Circumstances of the Baptism

Before we attempt to enter into the meaning of the Baptism of Jesus, whether for Himself or for us, it will be well to bring before our minds the events that took place on the occasion of it, as they are reported by St. Luke. These events are: (1) the Prayer, (2) the Opening of the Heavens, (3) the Descent of the Spirit, and (4) the Voice.

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i. The Prayer

There is one peculiarity about the life of our Lord Jesus Christ which everybody must have noticed who has carefully read the four Gospels, namely, that He was a man of much prayer. He was mighty as a preacher; for even the officers who were sent to arrest Him said, "Never man spake like this man." But He appears to have been even mightier in prayer, if such a thing could be possible. We do not read that His disciples ever asked Him to teach them to preach, but we are told that, "as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray." He had no doubt been praying with such wonderful fervour that His disciples realized that He was a master of the holy art of prayer, and they therefore desired to learn the secret for themselves. The whole life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of prayer. Though we are often told about His praying, we feel that we scarcely need to be informed of it, for we know that He must have been a man of prayer. His acts are the acts of a prayerful man; His words speak to us like the words of one whose heart was constantly lifted up in prayer to His Father. You could not imagine that He would have breathed out such blessings upon men if He had not first breathed in the atmosphere of heaven. He must have been much in prayer or He could not have been so abundant in service and so gracious in sympathy.

1. St. Luke informs us that Jesus rose out of the waters praying. This is a solemn hint as to the spirit in which all Divine ordinances ought to be received. When we come to the font seeking baptism either for ourselves or for others, when we sit at the Lord's Table, when we are on our way to church, when we open God's holy Word—as we take part in every such ordinance—we may learn from Jesus how to conduct; ourselves: the best state of mind is, to be engaged in prayer.

2. What may we suppose He was praying for? If we remember the nature of the ordinance in which He was participating and the stage of His own development which He had reached, can we doubt that He was praying for the coming of the Kingdom of God and for strength to play His own part in its inauguration? That generally.

But now, more particularly, what should He have been praying about? Clearly, if He came to St. John as claiming to be no exception to the multitude, He would fashion His prayer after the likeness of that of the multitude. And of what kind were their feelings and utterances as they descended into the waters of Jordan? They were "confessing their sins." They had been moved to do something outside the Law, because they felt a burden which no law could remove—"the weary weight of all their unintelligible" selves. When every commandment had been kept, there still remained the consciousness of not having realized their own capacities, of having fallen below the level of what they might have been, what they were intended to be. This is the

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guilt born of our very dignity; it haunts the worthiest, most; it is felt even by the meanest of us in hours of self-scrutiny. What could the carpenter's Son know of it? Little or nothing, if He were playing a part—pretending to heroism; much, if He were a genuine man; much also, if He were genuinely Divine; very much, therefore, if He were genuinely both—God and Man in one Person. Then He could have intense perceptions, would enter into the minds of others, and understand through sympathy what He did not learn by experience; then, knowing no sin, He could be “made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him.”

ii. The Opening of the Heavens

The answer to His prayer came suddenly and impressively. While He was yet speaking, His Father in heaven heard, and three wonders happened: first the heavens were opened; secondly the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descended on Him; and, thirdly, a voice came from heaven, saying: “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”

1. What is meant by the opening? The language used by the Evangelists is very graphic, suggesting that there was the appearance of a rent being made in the blue vault, by which the invisible things which lie within were disclosed. But what does this mean to us, who are well aware that the visible heaven is not what it was thought to be by the infant mind of the race—the floor of a celestial palace, the occupants and furnishings of which might be seen if an opening were made in the ceiling of our earthly abode?

The opening of the heavens was a magnificent emblem: it gave, at the very beginning of the Saviour's ministry, a vision, and, as it were, an epitome, of the whole work He came to do. He saw, it may be, for a brief moment, the glorious realm from which He had come to earth, and to which, through sorrow and toil, He was to make His way again. The heavens were opened to Him, as our Representative and Forerunner, thus giving us the assurance that every obstacle opposing our return to God would be overcome, and a way made for us into the very home of His dearest children.

2. This opening of the heavens is one of the most beautiful and significant circumstances connected with our Lord's visible ministry. Alas! that it should be with so many a poor and almost forgotten thing, like the gleam of the lightning, or the shining of the summer-day of a hundred years ago. With too many men the question is not, “Is heaven open above us, that we may have commerce there?”—but, “Is the earth open around us, that we may gather thence our comforts and our gains? Is the season good? Are the fields fruitful? Will the times soon mend? Will the click of machinery be heard ere long in full work in our mills, and the hum of revived trade in our towns?” These questions are good and right. A man is not worthy of his

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place in this great complex growing world if he does not feel an interest in such questions as these. But there are other questions of wider scope which ought to arise in men's hearts, and for answer to which they ought to listen as for life.

There are not a few who have tried hard to make this world, out of what seemed to them its abundant riches, supply all their need without Jesus Christ: but who have been baffled—beaten at every turn. They have gained only to lose. They have rejoiced, only to feel more acutely the pang of the after vexation. They have striven and suffered and sorrowed, only to get for inheritance that old bequest, which Solomon, so long dead, is bequeathing still—"all is vanity." In their desolation they begin to think, and to ask, "Is it God who tells us that 'all is vanity'? Is He the King of an empty Universe? Is there with Him, in His gift, nothing better than the things we have won and lost?" And the answer comes—that there is a way opened to Himself; that He disappoints only that He may fulfil; He takes away the less that He may give the more; He darkens earth that He may show us heaven; He has reserved Himself and His fulness for our eternal portion. Lo! the heavens are opened to them and, wise at last, they find their inheritance there.

iii. The Descent of the Spirit

1. The New Testament like the Old begins with the Spirit. Yet there is a difference in their beginnings. The Spirit of the Old Testament comes out from the darkness; it has to form the light by which we are to see it. But the Spirit of the New comes from light already created; it descends from the opened heavens. The Spirit of the Old Testament moves on the face of troubled waters; the Spirit of the New alights and reposes on the calm bosom of the Son of Man. No wonder the Spirit of the New Testament is like a dove; it has itself found peace in the heart of its own creation; it has reached in the soul of Jesus its Sabbath of rest.

2. The Holy Spirit, says St. Luke, "descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him." What, asks Stalker, was the dove which descended on Jesus? Was there a real dove, which, attracted by His gentleness, alighted on Him, as such creatures when domesticated will sometimes do on persons to whom they are drawn by kindness and amiability? Or was the dove a form of light which glided, with dove-like motion, down on His head to point Him out, as at Saul's conversion a light above the brightness of the sun shone round about him? An ancient legend says that the whole valley of the Jordan was illuminated.

These questions are not easily answered now. At an earlier time Keble could say "It is probable that the appearance of fire, or of a bright cloud, which had taken in former times the shape of a pillar guiding the Israelites, and which afterwards took that of fiery tongues lighting on the

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Apostles, now hovered over the Blessed Jesus in somewhat of the form of a dove, with wings spreading over Him; and we may be certain that it came down with the gentle steady motion of a dove.”

Alford is quite explicit: “The Holy Spirit descended not only in the manner of a dove, but in bodily form (Luke): which I cannot understand in any but the literal sense, as the bodily shape of a dove, seen by the Baptist. There can be no objection to this, the straightforward interpretation of the narrative, which does not equally apply to the Holy Spirit being visible at all, which John himself asserts Him to have been (John 1:32-34), even more expressly than is asserted here. Why the Creator Spirit may not have assumed an organized body bearing symbolical meaning, as well as any other material form, does not seem clear. This was the ancient, and is the only honest, interpretation. The express assertion of Luke, and the fact that all four Evangelists have used the same expression, which they would not have done if it were a mere tertium comparationis, are surely a sufficient refutation of this rationalizing (and, I may add, blundering) interpretation.”¹ [Note: H. Alford, *The Greek Testament*, i. 25.]

iv. The Voice

A “voice from heaven” was a familiar method of communicating the will of God. For examples of such voices in the Old Testament see Genesis 21:17; Genesis 22:11; Genesis 22:15; Exodus 19:19; Exodus 20:22; 1 Kings 19:12-13. In the Gospels the Father’s Voice is heard thrice—at the Baptism and the Transfiguration (cf. 2 Peter 1:17) and before the Passion (John 12:28). The Voice was audible or articulate only to those who had “ears to hear” (John 5:37; John 12:29).

The voice does not proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, as a legend would probably have represented. No such proclamation was needed either by Jesus or by the Baptist. The descent of the Spirit had told John that Jesus was the Christ (John 1:33). This voice from heaven, as afterwards at the Transfiguration (Luke 9:35), and again shortly before the Passion (John 12:28), followed closely upon Christ’s prayer, and may be regarded as the answer to it. His humanity was capable of needing the strength which the heavenly assurance gave. To call this voice from heaven the Bath-Kol of the Rabbis, or to treat it as analogous to it, is misleading. The Rabbinic Bath-Kol, or “Daughter-voice,” is regarded as an echo of the voice of God; and the Jews liked to believe that it had been granted to them after the gift of prophecy had ceased. The utterances attributed to it are in some cases so frivolous or profane that the more intelligent Rabbis denounced it as a superstition.

Luke 3:23-38

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Genealogies and the Bible

Some have deemed the Bible's many genealogical passages unnecessary. Yet, the frequency with which genealogies appear in the Scriptures is evidence of their importance. Genealogies established one's lineage—one's Jewishness, one's tribal identity, one's right to the priesthood and one's right to kingship.

From all the genealogies in the Hebrew Scriptures, two observations become apparent. With very rare exceptions, only the male line is traced and only men's names appear. The descendancy of women is not given and their names are only mentioned in passing. Since biblically it was the father who determined both national and tribal identity, it was reasoned that only his line was necessary.

The messianic genealogy of King David

In addition, only one line is traced from the beginning to the end of the biblical history, the line of King David. The Scriptures reveal every name before David (Adam to David) and every name after David (David to Zerubbabel). Since the Messiah was to be of the house of David, this can also be labeled as the messianic line. In fact, the genealogies limit more and more the human origin of the Messiah. As the Seed of the woman, Messiah had to come out of humanity. As the Seed of Abraham, Messiah had to come from the nation of Israel. As the Seed of Judah, he had to be of the tribe of Judah. As the Seed of David, he had to be of the family of David.

The Jewish Scriptures as background to the New Covenant

The pattern of genealogy in the Hebrew Scriptures is followed by the New Testament pattern where two genealogies are found: Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. Of the four gospel accounts, only those two deal with the birth and early life of Jesus. Both Mark and John begin their accounts with Jesus as an adult, so it is natural that only Matthew and Luke would have a genealogy. While they both provide an account of the birth and early life of Jesus, each tells the story from a different perspective.

In Matthew, Joseph plays an active role, but Miriam (Mary) plays a passive role. Matthew records angels appearing to Joseph, but there is no record of angels appearing to Miriam. Matthew records Joseph's thoughts but nothing is recorded about Miriam's thoughts. On the other hand, Luke's Gospel tells the same story from Miriam's perspective. From the context of each Gospel, it should be very evident that the genealogy of Matthew is that of Joseph, and the genealogy of Luke is that of Miriam.

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The question then raised is: Why do we need two genealogies, especially since Yeshua (Jesus) was not the real son of Joseph? A popular and common answer is: Matthew's Gospel gives the royal line, whereas Luke's Gospel gives the real line. From this concept, another theory arises. Since seemingly Joseph was the heir apparent to David's throne, and Jesus was the adopted son of Joseph, Jesus could claim the right to David's throne. On the other hand, Luke's Gospel gives the real line, showing that Yeshua himself was a descendant of David. Through Miriam, he was a member of the house of David, but he could claim the right to sit on David's throne through Joseph, the heir apparent. Actually the exact opposite is true.

Who Gets to Be King?

To understand the need for these two genealogies, it is important to understand the two requirements for kingship in the Hebrew Scriptures. These were developed after the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon....

One was applicable to the southern Kingdom of Judah, with its capital in Jerusalem, while the other was applicable to the northern Kingdom of Israel, with its capital in Samaria. The requirement for the throne of Judah was Davidic descendancy. No one was allowed to sit on David's throne unless he was a member of the house of David. So when there was a conspiracy to do away with the house of David (Isaiah 7:5-6), God warned that any such conspiracy was doomed to failure (Isaiah 8:9-15).

The requirement for the throne of Israel was prophetic sanction or divine appointment. Anyone who attempted to rule on Samaria's throne without prophetic sanction was assassinated (1 Kings 11:26-39; 15:28-30; 16:1-4, 11-15; 21:21-29; 2 Kings 9:6-10; 10:29-31; 14 8-12).

With the background of these two biblical requirements for kingship and what is stated in the two New Testament genealogies, the question of Jesus' right to the throne of David can be resolved.

Matthew's genealogy of Jesus

In his genealogy, Matthew breaks with Jewish tradition and custom. He mentions the names of four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba (who is the one to whom the pronoun "her" in verse six refers). It was contrary to Jewish practice to name women in a genealogy. The Talmud states, "A mother's family is not to be called a family." Even the few women Luke does mention were not the most prominent women in the genealogy of Yeshua. He could have mentioned Sarah, but did not. However, Matthew has a reason for naming these four and no others.

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First, they were all Gentiles. This is obvious with Tamar, Rahab and Ruth. It was probably true of Bathsheba, since her first husband, Uriah, was a Hittite. Here Matthew hints at something he makes clear later: that while the main purpose of the coming of Jesus was to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the Gentiles would also benefit from his coming. Second, three of these women were guilty of sexual sins. Bathsheba was guilty of adultery, Rahab was guilty of prostitution and Tamar was guilty of incest. Again, Matthew only hints at a point he later clarifies: that the purpose of the Messiah's coming was to save sinners. While this fits into the format of Old Testament genealogy, it is not Matthew's main point.

The lineage of Joseph, Jesus' father

Matthew's genealogy also breaks with tradition in that he skips names. He traces the line of Joseph, the step-father of Jesus, by going back into history and working toward his own time. He starts tracing the line with Abraham (verse 2) and continues to David (verse 6). Out of David's many sons, Solomon is chosen (verse 6), and the line is then traced to King Jeconiah (verse 11), one of the last kings before the Babylonian captivity. From Jeconiah (verse 12), the line is traced to Joseph (verse 16). Joseph was a direct descendant of David through Solomon, but also through Jeconiah. The "Jeconiah link" is significant in Matthew's genealogy because of the special curse pronounced on Jeconiah in Jeremiah 22:24-30:

As I live," declares the LORD, "even though Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on my right hand, yet I would pull you off... "Is this man Jeconiah a despised, shattered jar? Or is he an undesirable vessel? Why have he and his descendants been hurled out and cast into a land that they had not known? "O land, land, land, Hear the word of the LORD!! "Thus says the LORD, 'Write this man [Jeconiah] down childless, A man who will not prosper in his days; For no man of his descendants will prosper Sitting on the throne of David, Or ruling again in Judah.'

No descendant of Jeconiah would have the right to the throne of David. Until Jeremiah, the first requirement for messianic lineage was to be of the house of David. With Jeremiah, it was limited still further. Now one had to be not only of the house of David, but apart from Jeconiah.

Joseph and Jeconiah

According to Matthew's genealogy, Joseph had the blood of Jeconiah in his veins. He was not qualified to sit on David's throne. He was not the heir apparent. This would also mean that no real son of Joseph would have the right to claim the throne of David. Therefore if Jesus were the real son of Joseph, he would have been disqualified from sitting on David's throne. Neither could he claim the right to David's throne by virtue of his adoption by Joseph, since Joseph was not the heir apparent.

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The purpose of Matthew's genealogy, then, is to show why Yeshua could not be king if he were really Joseph's son. The purpose was not to show the royal line. For this reason, Matthew starts his Gospel with the genealogy, presents the Jeconiah problem, and then proceeds with the account of the virgin birth which, from Matthew's viewpoint, is the solution to the Jeconiah problem. In summary, Matthew deduces that if Jesus were really Joseph's son, he could not claim to sit on David's throne because of the Jeconiah curse; but Jesus was not Joseph's son, for he was born of the virgin Miriam (Matthew 1:18-25).

Luke's genealogy of Jesus

Unlike Matthew, Luke follows strict Jewish procedure and custom in that he omits no names and mentions no women. However, if by Jewish custom one could not mention the name of a woman, but wished to trace her line, how would one do so? He would use the name of her husband. (Possible Old Testament precedents for this practice are Ezra 2:61 and Nehemiah 7:63.) That would raise a second question: If someone studied a genealogy, how would he know whether the genealogy were that of the husband or that of the wife, since in either case the husband's name would be used? The answer is not difficult; the problem lies with the English language.

In English it is not good grammar to use a definite article ("the") before a proper name ("the" Matthew, "the" Luke, "the" Miriam); however, it is quite permissible in Greek grammar. In the Greek text of Luke's genealogy, every single name mentioned has the Greek definite article "the" with one exception: the name of Joseph (Luke 3:23). Someone reading the original would understand by the missing definite article from Joseph's name that this was not really Joseph's genealogy, but his wife Miriam's.

Furthermore, although many translations of Luke 3:23 read: "...being supposedly the son of Joseph, the son of Eli..." because of the missing Greek definite article before the name of Joseph, that same verse could be translated as follows: "Being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph the son of Heli..."¹ In other words, the final parenthesis could be expanded so that the verse reads that although Yeshua was "supposed" or assumed to be the descendant of Joseph, he was really the descendant of Heli. Heli was the father of Miriam. The absence of Miriam's name is quite in keeping with the Jewish practices on genealogies. The Jerusalem Talmud recognized this genealogy to be that of Miriam and not Joseph and refers to Miriam as the daughter of Heli (Hagigah 2:2).

Starting with Adam

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Also in contrast to Matthew, Luke begins his genealogy with his own time and goes back into history all the way to Adam. It comes to the family of David in verses 31-32. However, the son of David involved in this genealogy is not Solomon but Nathan. So, like Joseph, Miriam was a member of the house of David. But unlike Joseph, she came from David's son, Nathan, not Solomon. Miriam was a member of the house of David apart from Jeconiah. Since Jesus was Miriam's son, he too was a member of the house of David, apart from Jeconiah.

In this way Jesus fulfilled the biblical requirement for kingship. Since Luke's genealogy did not include Jeconiah's line, he began his Gospel with the virgin birth, and only later, in describing Yeshua's public ministry, recorded his genealogy.

However, Jesus was not the only member of the house of David apart from Jeconiah. There were a number of other descendants who could claim equality with Yeshua to the throne of David, for they too did not have Jeconiah's blood in their veins. Why Jesus and not one of the others? At this point the second biblical requirement for kingship, that of divine appointment, comes into the picture. Of all the members of the house of David apart from Jeconiah, only one received divine appointment. Luke 1:30-33 states:

And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Miriam; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall name Him Yeshua. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end.'

On what grounds then could Jesus claim the throne of David? He was a member of the house of David apart from Jeconiah. He alone received divine appointment to that throne: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David."

Why Jesus?

While Matthew's genealogy showed why Yeshua could not be king if he really were Joseph's son, Luke's genealogy shows why Yeshua could be king. When he returns, he will be king.

Two things may be noted by way of conclusion. First, many rabbinic objections to the messiahship of Jesus are based on his genealogy. The argument goes, "Since Jesus was not a descendant of David through his father, he cannot be Messiah and King." But the Messiah was supposed to be different. As early as Genesis 3:15, it was proposed that the Messiah would be reckoned after the "seed of the woman," although this went contrary to the biblical norm. The

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necessity for this exception to the rule became apparent when Isaiah 7:14 prophesied that the Messiah would be born of a virgin: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call his name Immanuel.” Whereas all others receive their humanity from both father and mother, the Messiah would receive his humanity entirely from his mother. Whereas Jewish nationality and tribal identity were normally determined by the father, with the Messiah it would be different. Since he was to have no human father, his nationality and his tribal identity would come entirely from his mother. True, this is contrary to the norm, but so is a virgin birth. With the Messiah, things would be different.

In addition, these genealogies present a fourfold portrait of the messianic person through four titles. In Matthew 1:1 he is called the Son of David and the Son of Abraham. In Luke 3:38 he is called the Son of Adam and the Son of God. As the Son of David, it means that Jesus is king. As the Son of Abraham, it means that Jesus is a Jew. As the Son of Adam, it means that Jesus is a man. As the Son of God, it means that Jesus is God. This fourfold portrait of the messianic person as presented by the genealogies is that of the Jewish God-Man King. Could the Messiah be anyone less?

QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of a witness in a court of law?
2. When a witness is called, how important is the credibility of the witness in determining the strength of their testimony?
3. Have you ever been called to give witness in a court of law? What did you testify about, and in what way did you as a witness help prove the case that was being presented?
4. Have you ever listened to the testimony of someone who was not a credible witness? Was their testimony hard to believe?
5. If you were to build a case for Christianity, how important would it be to present credible witnesses that could be believed?
6. What would happen to Christianity if non-credible witnesses were selected to testify about Christ?
7. What significance is there that Jesus was baptized in John's baptism?
8. What do you think baptism by fire means?
9. Discuss all three persons of the Trinity being present at the Baptism.
10. Would you consider yourself a credible witness for Christ?
11. What areas of life need to be submitted to God that the power of the Holy Spirit can work through you?

Sources

Biblegateway.com

JewsforJesus.com

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