



### WHAT KIND OF MYSTERY?

We are all a part of a lineage, a line of ancestry, that has been around for multiple generations and, for some of us at least, will continue after we're gone.

But in reality, we have not 1 but 2 ancestral lines: we're all the product of 2 families coming together, represented by a male and female representative from those families, and after a bit of biological bish-bash-bosh, you were the result! (Apologies to those of you who thought you came by stork.)

The same is true of Jesus: He is part of 2 ancestral lines. We've looked at Joseph's; now it's Mary's turn. And the biggest mystery of them all.

### Luke 3:23-38

Ok, so Jesus has 2 lines of ancestry, both of which involve King David. But in terms of Matthew's account, one of those lines is a bit of a cheat (in that Joseph was not Jesus' biological dad – because Jesus didn't have one). The other line, however, is biologically legit – because this is *Mary's* line, in Joseph's name.

What do you notice about Luke's genealogy? In what ways does it differ from Matthew's?

- **The names are different** – at least those from David to Jesus. This is because Mary's line goes back to David's son Nathan, rather than David's son Solomon.

- **The lengths are different** – and unlike Matthew’s 3-sets-of-14 names, Luke’s divides up into 11-sets-of-7 names, charting the journey from God to Jesus.
- **The directions are different** – unlike Matthew’s ‘so-and-so begat so-and-so’ lineage, Luke gives Jesus’ genealogy in reverse (so ‘so-and-so son of so-and-so’).

Why structure it this way? Why the Christopher Nolan *Memento* approach? To communicate something to us: the reader. Because Luke’s reverse-order family tree lands on 2 particular individuals / titles:

Son of Adam. Son of God.

And both say something powerful about Jesus.

**1) Son of Adam.** The title ‘Son of Adam’ here is a reference to Seth, third son of Adam according to Genesis 4:25. But there’s a bit more to it than that.

For Jews, to be a *ben-adam* carried certain connotations:

- It might have meant you’re a king (Psalms 8, 80).
- It definitely meant you’re a human (Ezekiel, Daniel)!

Now Luke, being a doctor, is probably thinking that last one. I.e. he’s saying, “Jesus is as human, as flesh-and-blood, as ‘Adam’, as you and me.” And this is important. There are people who think that Jesus never laughed, never cried, never felt tired, never felt pain, never felt the need to relieve Himself – never even felt His feet touch the ground. As if Jesus’ humanity was so swallowed up by His deity that He didn’t know what it is to be us.

But He does. And as we’ll see, it’s *vital* that He does – because He had to pass the tests we fail. And He had to die.

So, Luke is saying, “Jesus is everything that Adam was, before Adam blew it.” I.e. mortal. Yet without sin.

But that’s not all. Because Jesus is also:

**2) Son of God.** The title ‘Son of God’ here is obviously a reference to Adam, as the first true human being (we’ll think about what that means in a minute). But as I’ve said, the real reason for Luke taking Jesus’ family tree all the way back to the start is to make a point about Jesus.

Again, for Jews, *ben-elohim* carried certain connotations:

- It might have meant you’re a king (e.g. Psalm 2).
- It might have meant you’re a human (e.g. Adam).

But there are another 2:

- It might have meant you’re Israel (e.g. Hosea 11).
- It might have meant you’re an angel (e.g. Job 1, 2).

In a nutshell: son of God = representative of God, in visible, audible, tangible form. That’s what Adam was made to be; what Israel was made to be. What

we were all made to be! We are God's image-bearers. However, we can never *truly* represent what God is – because we're not God! We're not omnipotent / omniscient / omnipresent / omnibenevolent – and we're certainly not perfect! But -

In Jesus, God has entered the picture by taking on human form and representing *Himself* – as only He can. And that's the second point that Luke is making here.

That Jesus is not only everything *we* are. He's everything *God* is.

### **Adding It Up ...**

Now before we get on to why it matters, this obviously raises the question: how can Jesus be all that God is, and all that we are (minus sin), at the same time?

It's a migraine-inducing conundrum, and one the church spent a couple of centuries wrestling with. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD was called for exactly this reason, and the conclusion, held by all true Christians since, is that Jesus is made up of 2 distinct natures – human and divine – in 1 person: Himself. It's what is called the 'hypostatic union' (from the Greek *hypostasis*, person). So not half-man, half-God, or God pretending to be a man, or a man merely acting on God's behalf. Jesus is everything God is, and everything humanity is, in one all-powerful, yet vulnerable, individual.

And here's why it matters:

- If Jesus is going to represent humanity to the Father, if He is going to reclaim the deeds to planet earth, if He is going to actually physically *die* for the sins of the world, He would have to be as human as we are.
- If He is going to represent the Father to humanity, if He is going to take all our offences against God and forgive us, if He is going to one day rule this world as only God can, He would have to be as God as God is.

He'd have live like we do, die like we do, rise like we will – and be as good as God is. He'd have to be Son of Adam. Son of God.

But how will this affect you and me, come Christmas Day? Or any day, for that matter? Well, whatever *life* looks like, Jesus is in a position to say, "I know what you're going through. Let's talk about it." And whatever *we* look like, He's in a position to say, "Your sins are forgiven. Let's move on."

I.e. in Jesus, we have perfect empathy, perfect clemency, all rolled into one.

In Jesus, we have Son of Adam. Son of God.