

• *The purpose of Jesus' genealogy here*

Luke's and Matthew's genealogies contrasted

• *Luke backwards Matthew forwards*

• *Jesus son of Joseph legally not biologically*

• *Matthew uses a succession list – whereas Luke shows physical descent*

• *Possible inclusion of Levirate marriages*

• *Traced through different parts of the family line*

• *Succession v biological*

• *Nathan v Solomon*

• *Both show Jesus descent from Abraham*

A person's ancestors have a lot to do with his identity. At this point Luke shares with us Jesus' 'genealogy' (list of ancestors). Again one might think that this section is out of chronological order. It could have come at the beginning of the gospel. But Luke has been dealing with the events that prepared the way for Jesus. Now he comes to focus on Jesus Himself. So this is a good point at which to insert the genealogy of Jesus to show who Jesus is and how He fits into world history.

There are some differences between this genealogy and the one in Matthew's Gospel. Luke's genealogy starts from Jesus and works backwards until it reaches Adam, and God ^{☩¹}. Matthew's genealogy starts with Abraham and moves forward until it gets to Jesus ^{☩²}.

The genealogy begins with a note of Jesus' approximate age at the time His ministry began ^{☩¹} and a reminder that Jesus was not really the biological son of Joseph but was only his son legally ^{☩²}.

The section in 3:23c–31 runs from Jesus back to David. It proves that Jesus is the descendant of David. It is Joseph's ancestors that are being listed. Jesus was the legal son of Joseph. 'He was, in the minds of the people the son of Joseph', says 3:23b. Joseph is said to be 'son of Heli, son of Matthat' ^{☩¹} but in Matthew 1:15–16 he is the son of 'Jacob', who was the son of 'Matthan'. This could mean that the genealogy is Mary's genealogy and Joseph was treated as Heli's son because of his marriage to Mary. But more likely Matthew's genealogy is a list of those who were entitled to be the king of Israel. It is a succession-list. Luke's list is more a list of the physical descent although there might be some Levirate marriages in it (places where a man begot a son with his brother's wife because the brother had died). Joseph was probably biologically the son of Heli ^{☩²} but if Jacob ^{☩³} had no sons Joseph would have inherited the royal line from him. Matthew's list runs through Solomon.

The names in Luke 3:24–27 are different from the names in Matthew 1:13–16. The genealogy is being traced through a different part of the family at this point. There is no problem in this. It often happens that a person can trace his ancestry to a figure of long ago through more than one section of the family. Luke has more names than Matthew. This probably means that Matthew is leaving out some generations. In the genealogies the word 'son' may mean 'descendant'. In Luke 3:27b 'Rhesa' is an Aramaic word meaning 'prince' and the line should be probably be translated 'son of Prince Zerubbabel'.

In Luke 3:27d Shealtiel is son of Neri, son of Melchi; but in Matthew 1:12 he is son of Jeconiah. Matthew is giving the line of entitlement to the throne of David. Luke's list is more strictly biological.

In Luke 3:27e–31 the names are totally different. Luke's list runs through Nathan. Matthew's list ^{☩¹} runs through Solomon.

The section in Luke 3:32–34 runs back from David to Abraham. These are more-or-less the same as the names in Matthew 1:2–5. They show that Jesus descended from Abraham.

^{☩¹} in 3:38
^{☩²} Matthew 1:2–17

^{☩¹} 3:23a
^{☩²} 3:23b

^{☩¹} 3:23–24

^{☩²} Luke 3:23

^{☩³} Matthew 1:16

^{☩¹} Matthew 1:5–8

• *Matthew special interest is Israel goes back to Abraham*

• *Luke's special interest humanity goes back to Adam*

• *Based on accurate official records*

Jesus – Son of

• *David*

• *Abraham*

• *Adam*

• *God*

• *Each has important significance*

The section in 3:34–38 runs back from Abraham to Adam. They show that Jesus was not only the one who fulfilled the promises to the House of David, not only the one that fulfilled the promises to Abraham, but also the one who fulfilled God's intention for the entire human race. Matthew is specially interested in Israel; Luke is specially interested in the fact that Jesus comes for the entire human race.

At this stage of Jewish history Jewish people preserved the records of their ancestry. Jewish people sent the names of their children to be officially recorded.¹ Those who were descended from David would be especially careful to keep records because the Old Testament predicted the Messiah would come from the line of David.

There are seventy-five people in this list of Jesus' forefathers. Jesus fulfils the promises of God concerning Himself that were given to David, to Abraham, and to Adam.

1. As **Son of David**, Jesus was the One who was anointed by the Spirit and rules over God's total people. David was given a promise that one day there would come someone who would follow the pattern he had started.

2. As **Son of Abraham**, Jesus fulfils the promise that Abraham's seed will bring worldwide blessing. Abraham was promised that one day he would have a seed through whom Israel would come into being and through whom eventually all the nations of the world would be blessed.

3. As **Son of Adam**, Jesus is genuinely human, and is fully qualified to minister to the human race. To Adam was given the promise that one day what had happened through him would eventually be reversed through a member of the human race who be 'the seed of the woman', but apparently not the seed of Adam!

4. As **Son of God**, Jesus is like Adam who was also 'son of God' ¹. The first man was brought into being by a direct act of God. Jesus is a second Adam who re-starts the human race on a new basis.

¹ Luke 3:38

As Son of David, Jesus is our king. As Son of Abraham, Jesus links us into the worldwide blessing He intends for the human race. As Son of Adam, Jesus is capable of being our sympathiser, for He is a fellow human being. As Son of God, Jesus has the power to protect us and bring us to glory, since He was specially brought into being for this very purpose.

Note

1. See Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1:8.



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