



JESUS IS MAN

Part 13 of Luke's Gospel: Investigating the Man Who Is God

Pastor Mark Driscoll | Luke 3:23-38 | January 10, 2010

LUKE 3:23-38

²³ Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, ²⁷ the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸ the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, ²⁹ the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰ the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, ³¹ the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, ³² the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, ³³ the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, ³⁴ the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, ³⁵ the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, ³⁶ the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, ³⁷ the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, ³⁸ the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

INTRODUCTION

All right, Mars Hill, the moment you've all been waiting for. The genealogy, the page of the phone book that made it into Luke's Gospel. I know you've all been reading it for months, just saying, "I can't wait for that one. Seventy-six names, thirty-eight of which I can't find anywhere else in my Bible. Names I can't even pronounce, dudes who sound like Jedi knights. Why are they in my Bible? I can't wait." Well, today's your day. We're going to look at Luke 3:23-38, the genealogy of Jesus, the family tree and history of Jesus, a page out of the ancient phone book.

And we begin with this assumption that all Scripture is God-breathed and profitable, that everything in the Bible is from God and for our good. So we hit the genealogies, and they are interspersed and scattered throughout the Scriptures. We come with a presupposition that there's gold in there if we just dig for it, as opposed to reading fast ("Arphaxad? By, next, move on."). If you stop, slow down, pay attention, study, consider, examine, I think there's a lot there for us. I think one of the reasons why we tend not to get totally excited about genealogies- I mean, good luck going to the Christian bookstore saying, "I would like a book on all the genealogies." They will say, "There's genealogies in the Bible?" I mean, it's not that enormous a field of study.

CONNECTING TO A PEOPLE AND A PLACE

But I think one of the reasons is that we live in a world that is very culturally distinct and removed from the days of the Scriptures. In that day, you lived on the piece of land, generally speaking, that your ancestors did. The Bible talks about boundary markers between different families, kin, and clan. It's the same thing that my family and I saw when we went to Scotland some years ago. We got into the countryside, and there are stone walls, literally stones stacked one on top of the other like the days of the Old Testament and the New Testament. And these were boundary markers between families. So on that side of the wall is your family's land and on this side is my family's land. And even in Scotland some of these walls had been there for hundreds of years, these boundary markers. And so you would live where your parents lived, where your grandparents lived, where your great-grandparents lived, where your great, great, great-grandparents had lived. And the expectation was that your great, great, great-grandchildren one day would live in that land as well. And that you would oftentimes even share a trade. So if your daddy was a blacksmith, you were a blacksmith. If your daddy was a farmer, you were a farmer.

There was this deep historical connectedness between generations. And so tracing your ancestry and history was very important. It was very much an establishing part of your identity. This was true up until, in large part, the modern era. René Descartes came out with his Cogito ergo sum, "I think therefore I am." And it's about me and not we; it's about I and not us. It's about the individual and it's not about the family and the kin and the clan and the tribe. And rugged individualism kicks in, and then there's urbanization. People leave their family's homeland and they go into the cities, and then there's modern travel and there's war and there's famine and there are educational and travel opportunities, and there is the fracturing of the family and divorce.

And the result is that people are now scattered. And you don't have a deep historical rootedness to a people or place. For some, it leads to psychological displacement. Who am I? What's my identity? Some people don't even know their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents. That's why there's a

resurgence on television for reality television shows to introduce people to their family that they've never met, as well as whole shows that are dedicated to bringing together broken families that have never interacted with one another, some having never even met close relatives.

Now, not every broken family is necessarily a bad family. There are good reasons to relocate. My family is one example. So is Abraham's family. You'll hear of him in the genealogy of Luke's Gospel. God came to Abram and told him, "Leave your family, go to another place, become a patriarch, your wife will become a matriarch. You're going to start a new family and things are going to change in your legacy and lineage through your faithfulness and your faith in me." My family was a similar story. I was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Was originally from Ireland, that's where my ancestors are from. We were O'Driscoll, until we dropped the O. And I can't wait to go to Ireland here coming up in the next year or so. I'm going to visit and I'm going to go where my relatives grew up and still abide and reside. I'm going to meet them, at least the ones that are willing to meet me. And we'll see what the history of my family is. I know that they're from the rebel county, lots of blue-collar workers, a tough bunch. I'm told that a lot of wars started in that region with my clan – now my life is coming into sharper focus; I understand something of who I am. And I can't wait to go there to see, where are my people, and where is our history, and what was our land.

And that's been the case historically. So there's even this modern longing in this fragmented moveable world to be connected, rooted, to a people and to a place. And what Luke's genealogy does is it helps us connect to a people and a place.

You know, I'm glad that my ancestors came to America, and I'm glad that my parents, when I was born, moved away from Grand Forks, North Dakota, where we resided. There was not a lot of work. There was a lot of alcoholism and spousal abuse and criminal activity. And I don't come from the finest family, that's for sure. But my mom and dad wanted to get us away from that. I've got a lot of relatives my own age who have been drug addicts, I've got some in prison at present, cousins my own age. I mean, it's really tragic. And my parents wanted to get me out of that, and that's how I ended up in Seattle, in the providence of God. So all of that to say, this lack of connection to a people and a place, it can be disorienting, but it's sometimes also a great gift of God.

WHAT WE LEARN FROM GENEALOGIES

But as we read Luke's Gospel, it's trying to tie Jesus to people in places, to generations, to historical rootedness. And there are at least two things we learn from genealogies in the Bible in general and the genealogy of Luke in particular. Number one, God is faithful to work generationally. He is. He works faithfully from one generation to the next. That's what we see in Luke's Gospel. It shows in the genealogy of Jesus that he was faithful to generations. And as a father, this is incredibly encouraging, that the same God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is faithful to my parents and my wife's parents is faithful to us, and then is faithful to our children. And by the grace of God will be faithful to our children's children. That God is a multigenerational faithful God.

Number two, we learn that sometimes the biggest contribution that you make is not your contribution at all, but it's the legacy and lineage of faith that comes through your family line. As we read these seventy-six names, depending upon what translation of the Bible you have, roughly half of them we know nothing about. They're like you. Some of you, if we Google you, you don't come up. Okay? Others of you, if we Google, you do come up. Luke 3 is like that. If we go to the Bible, half of the people, we know nothing about them. The other half, we know varying degrees of information about them; some are famous, some are infamous in major and minor ways. And the point is that sometimes it is the less known people who raise the better known people, and those are the people that God chooses to bestow particular grace on to be used for his kingdom purposes on the earth.

A GENERATIONAL LEGACY

So what we like to do at Mars Hill is we like to think with generational legacy and lineage in mind. And the opposite of this would be an argument I recently had with a single guy. It's always a single guy. [Laughter] And the single guy wanted to argue with me, because he's single and has lots of free time to argue. [Laughter] And he wanted to argue- He said, "I don't want to get married and I don't want to have children because I don't want anything to get in my way of serving Jesus." And I said, "Well, what are you doing that's so epic? [Laughter] Other than arguing with me." And what he said was, "You know, well, children get in the way." I said, "Well, if you have a wife that loves Jesus, then the two of you served together, you could really serve Jesus. And if you have some kids who love Jesus and they serve Jesus, and their kids have kids who love and serve Jesus, you could end up with hundreds of thousands of people. You could be like Jacob's family going into Egypt, right? Dozens of people, by the time they leave it's millions of people. And I could tell you this, if you and your wife and your children and their children and their children all love and serve Jesus, you're going to get a lot more done, just with your lineage and legacy." So it's thinking generationally.

And sometimes Christians don't want to have children-and sometimes they need to postpone it for health or economic or emotional or spiritual reasons, I understand that-but the big idea is this, that children are a blessing. Children are gifts from God. That we want to love and serve the Lord. We want to raise our children to love and serve the Lord. We want to be used for God's purposes, and we want to raise children who will be used for God's purposes as well, so that there can be generations of faithful legacy and servants of God. Amen? That's what we want.

And that's what we see in Luke's Gospel. Multiple generations that God was in covenant faithfulness to, and multiple generations that God used, some people in a big way, some people in a small way. But even those that were used of God in a small way, they brought forth children and grandchildren that were used of God in a big way. And that's all entertained in the genealogies that the Bible includes.

THE CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

Now as we come to the gospels, I'll give you an introduction of the genealogy of Luke. There are four gospels; these are biographical sketches of the life of Jesus. All true. Telling the story a bit differently, with different emphases for primary audiences in addition to us, who are the secondary

audience. We call it contextualization. The Bible is put together thinking like a missionary: how do we explain Jesus to these people and these people and these people? Tell them all the same thing, but tell it in a way that makes the most sense to them. So as you read the gospels- and this will be a little more of a theological excursus, for those of you who are more theological neatniks and you love footnotes and reading dead people and going to community group to argue, this will help set you up. And then we'll move onto the practical. So the rest of you, hang in there.

As you go to the four gospels, two have genealogies, two do not. Mark does not. He is writing primarily, firstly, to a Roman audience. They don't care what your history and pedigree is. They're a multiethnic, multinational empire. They don't really have much concern about your family background and history. So it skips Jesus' genealogy, it's the shortest gospel. All they want to know is, did he live without sin, did he die for sin, did he rise for salvation, is he the savior or not? Yes, he is. Lots of present tense active verbs.

You go to John's Gospel, his primary audience is Greeks steeped in Greek philosophy. So he takes this concept, the logos, or Word of God from Heraclitus, and Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and Epimenides, and he connects it with the Hebrew concept of Jesus being the Word of God. And he says in John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:14, "The word" – Jesus, the second member of the Trinity – "became flesh." God became a man. That's what he tells us about Jesus.

You go to Matthew's Gospel, he's writing firstly to a Jewish audience. They know that a promise was made to their father Abraham, that through him Messiah Savior would come. And so he starts right in chapter one answering their first question, what's the connection between Jesus and Abraham. And so Matthew's Gospel, it works backward from father to son, all the way back, showing that Jesus is of the family line of Abraham.

Luke is writing not to Jews as his first and primary audience, but to what we'll call Gentiles, non-Jews like you and me, people of various nations and cultures and races and people groups. And we're not as interested in whether or not, you know, he fits the family tree and is a direct descendant through David and Abraham for the covenant promises of God. We're more concerned about was he really God, was he really man. Did God really become a man? Is he truly Immanuel, God with us? And so Luke puts his genealogy in chapter three, not chapter one like Matthew, showing that Jesus is fully God, fully man. And in so doing he traces Jesus' genealogy not back to Abraham, but back a little further all the way to Adam.

LUKE'S GENEALOGY COMPARED TO MATTHEW'S GENEALOGY

Now for those of you who are Bible students or you've studied Scripture or are studying Scripture at college, there will be this notation made that there are distinctions between Matthew's genealogy and Luke's. First, as I told you, Luke goes back to Adam. Matthew only goes back to Abraham. Luke goes from son to father. Matthew's goes from father to son. Matthew's works forward from Abraham to Jesus. Luke works backward from Jesus to Adam. And some of the names are common, and many of the names are not common. So you'll find lists in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 that are not all together congruent. And the question is why.

Scholars have given four potential reasons. One, it is supposed that maybe one of the genealogies is Joseph's line, Jesus' father, the other is Mary's line, Jesus' mother. It is true that generally speaking the genealogies are traced what we'll call patriarchally, through the male line. But if Mary had no brothers then she would be the one inserted in the genealogy. So this may be two genealogies, one for Jesus' adoptive father, the other for his mother. Number two, some presuppose that maybe these are not complete genealogies, that there may be some people who are missing. Thirdly, some would say that maybe one is a biological line: everyone born into a family. And then the other is just the legal line: those who had rights legally to the family name and inheritance. So one is complete and the other is legal. Some would offer, fourthly, this explanation that one of the genealogies includes not just those who are biologically born as direct descendants, but also those who are adopted in, as Jesus was. In that day the mortality rate was high, and if someone died and they had children, those children would be adopted by the closest living relative. So that may explain some of the distinction between the two genealogies. One has some of the children that were adopted in, and the other just has biological. All of that to say there are ways to consider how these might work together. For those of you who are more studious, that would be some fun for you. Or maybe not.

WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Here is the big idea for you. Why should you care about the genealogy in Luke? Well, he tells us in Luke 3:23 why we should care. Here's the beginning of Jesus' family tree: "Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of Joseph."

1. JESUS WAS ADOPTED.

First, it mentions that Jesus' father is Joseph, not his biological father. Some supposed that Joseph was his biological father, but the truth is that Jesus did not have an earthly, biological father.

We've looked at it in Matthew, it's also articulated in Luke, that Jesus' mother was a virgin in fulfillment of the promise to Isaiah that the virgin will be with child. Mary was a virgin, engaged or betrothed to Joseph, had not had any relations, the Bible says, with any man. She conceived not by a man, but by the power, a miracle of God the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity. And so Joseph adopted Jesus, though he was not his biological father.

And this is hugely important. In that day children were oftentimes disregarded, cast away; infanticide was practiced; infant exposure, just leaving the children to die, was not uncommon. Christians, very early on, began adopting children so they wouldn't end up as prostitutes or gladiators or abused slaves. And if you would have asked a Christian, "Why are you adopting these children?" they would have said, "Our God came into human history as the man Jesus Christ, and he was adopted." A hard-working, honest, blue-collar man named Joseph adopted Jesus and raised him as his own. Isn't that beautiful?

This is one of the most encouraging things to tell a child who's been adopted when they wonder, who is my family, why did my parents not want me,

where did my father go, what did my mother do. It's nice to be able to tell a child, "Well, you're like Jesus. See, his mother was a single mother, and he didn't have a father, and Joseph adopted him." Christians who adopt children get to tell the story of the gospel to their own children.

And I'm not saying it's easy, sometimes it's very hard. Particularly if you raise children after having adopted them when they're a bit older, having to undo a lot of life patterns, as some of my friends are with their own adoptive children. But I would set this before you. Some of you men really need to put before you a consideration of being like Joseph. If you're a single man looking for a wife, it's a good thing to ask, "Is there a single mother who loves Jesus and is fit for marriage that I could love and pursue with children that I could adopt and be like Joseph and give those kids a daddy?" That's a good thing, right? We really celebrate that at Mars Hill.

And some of you who are parents, or maybe you're struggling even with infertility or miscarriage or having a difficult time starting your family, let adoption be an option. Why? Because Jesus was adopted. Grace and I are still open to that. We have five kids, we love being parents. When we first met that was one of my first questions for Gracie. "What do you think about kids?" We were seventeen. She's like, "Why, do you have some?" [Laughter] "No, not yet. But I do have plans." I didn't want to pursue a relationship with a woman who didn't want to be a mother because I wanted to have a large family. She wanted to be a mom. She wanted to have a family too. Great. Little while later she asked me, "What do you think about adoption?" "I'm open to it. If God opens an opportunity, I'm open to that opportunity."

And we know many couples that are struggling with infertility and miscarriage, some of the elders and leaders in the church and church planters that we know, we know lots of wonderful families that would be glad to adopt a child. And so this is the heart of Christianity, to welcome people into our family as God welcomes us into his family. All of that's encapsulated with this ideology that Joseph was Jesus' adopted father.

2. JESUS WAS THIRTY.

Additionally, it says that Jesus was about thirty years of age when he began his public ministry. Before that, Luke 2 told us, he grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with men and God. God humbly came into human history, set aside the continual use of his divine attributes, identified himself with us, had to learn how to read and write and study the Scriptures and preach and teach and lead, and he was spiritually, physically, emotionally, relationally maturing. Not that he was in sin, but he was going through the kind of process that we do growing and maturing, preparing himself for ministry.

And he starts his ministry at age thirty. Let me say this. The scribes, the Levites started their ministry at about age thirty. Joseph takes a political rulership in Egypt at about age thirty. David begins his political career at about age thirty. Ezekiel begins his prophetic and priestly ministry at about age thirty. In addition, John the Baptizer starts preaching at about age thirty. And Jesus kicks off his public ministry at about age thirty.

You don't have to be thirty to start ministry, but take it from a guy who started at twenty-five, it's a much better idea to start at thirty than twenty-five. God saved me at nineteen, called me into ministry, I married Grace at twenty-one, I graduated at twenty-two, I did a bit of ministry, and then started Mars Hill at twenty-five. We started gathering the core group when Grace was pregnant with our first child, our daughter Ashley, and we were about twenty-five years of age. We launched Mars Hill just before I was twenty-six. No Bible college, no seminary, had never been a pastor in a church, had never been a member of a church. And I thought, "Well, obviously with a resume like that, I need to start a church. All that experience, wisdom and insight." [Laughter] Ridiculous. That's what I was. I was ridiculous.

And what happens, I think, it set a culture in Mars Hill that I want to correct here. Sometimes young leaders will come in, they'll be like, "Well, Mark was twenty-five," and ridiculous. "But he made it." By the grace of God I made it. But it's like your first day of driver's ed in a semi with a stick shift, you know, in rush hour with a blindfold. [Laughter] They're like, "Well, he made it." By the grace of God, with a lot of dents and screaming. [Laughter] That's pretty much the early years of Mars Hill.

And by the grace of God we have made it. But I think it has set in motion a culture where sometimes those who are young and have aspirations, they don't take as much time to mature perhaps as they should. I won't set thirty as a legalism. The truth is-not to impugn anyone's character-but I tried to get mentoring and training and it didn't go really well. So I just punted and went for it. We want to be a church that develops young leaders, helps you mature and grow. That's why we've opened Re:Train, that's why we have internships, that's why we have membership, and that's why we have programs that help develop you, that's why we're adding an undergraduate program. It's not just to slow you down. But what happens is most young leaders are worried about a great start, not a great finish. We want you to finish well. If you're going to start a ministry at thirty, we want you to end well at seventy or eighty by the grace of God. Too many people start too early and it's over quickly.

And Jesus grew in wisdom, stature, and favor with men and God, and if Jesus didn't think he was ready till thirty, we're probably not ready till thirty. Amen? If Jesus needed till thirty, maybe a little more time on the clock would be beneficial to you.

3. JESUS JOINED A MESSED UP FAMILY.

Now that being said, the genealogy of Jesus is a series of people who were sinners that died. If you read the genealogy of Jesus, you're going to read about these people: Terah, who was an idolater; Abraham, who was an adulterer and a liar and gave his wife away twice, which is twice too many; Jacob was a cheater and a thief; Judah traded slaves and enjoyed prostitutes; David was an adulterer and a murderer.

As you read the genealogy of Luke, don't let it degenerate into Baptist fundamentalist Sunday school to where the people in the pages of the Bible get lifted up like superheroes. You're like, "Man, I want to be like Abraham." Well, sort of. [Laughter] As far as getting a gal pregnant that you're not married to, maybe not. Being a coward, giving away your wife twice, hmm, maybe not. The faith thing, yes, stick with that. "I wish I could be like David." Hmm, you can be, if you commit adultery and murder a guy. Maybe not a great idea. Maybe not what you would aspire to. "Well, David served

the Lord.” Yeah, he did. And he also impregnated Bathsheba and murdered Uriah the Hittite, her husband, to cover up his sin.

See, the genealogy of Jesus includes a lot of people who, God did love them and God did pursue them, and they did have a relationship with God, but they were quite a mess. And here’s what happens. So many Christian families are fakers and pretenders. “How are you?” “Great.” We’re the Christians. Right? We’ve got it all together. Want to see our T-shirts, our bumper stickers, our home school curriculum? You want to see it? We’ve got it all together.

And what happens is it sets in this culture of fakery, this culture of inauthenticity. And what I love about Jesus’ family, “Well, here’s this guy and here’s that guy.” You look at the names and you go, “These are not all the best people. I mean, there are some real sinners in here. This is a really messed up family.” And maybe you come from a very messed up family. The good news is Jesus is apparently willing to get deeply involved in very messed up families. Maybe you come from a family that’s got lots of skeletons in the closet, and Jesus is the one who is willing to bring them all out, deal with everybody’s sin and hypocrisy and religiosity, and really make a transformative difference in a family.

And some of you would wonder, “Man, is my family fit for Christianity?” Well, there is no hope for your family apart from Jesus. And what I love about the genealogy is it includes some of the worst people. God loves them. God pursues them. Jesus joins their family. Jesus redeems their family. Like I told you, I come from a line of wife beaters, alcoholics, tragic stories, poverty, bad, bad, bad legacy and lineage, but Jesus in his grace has decided to get involved in my family. Saved my mom and dad, saved me, saved my siblings. We’ve seen lots of my extended family meet Jesus, we’ve seen some amazing life transformation. That’s Jesus. He’s not looking for good families, he’s looking for honest families, and he’s the one who jumps in and does the good.

GOD’S COVENANT LOVE

And all of this—this genealogical legacy, God’s faithfulness to generations, his getting involved in messed up families, raising up new patriarchs and matriarchs to create new family lines—it all fits theologically under the rubric of something called covenant. Let me explain covenant to you in the Bible. And as we read the genealogy of Luke, it’s really about God’s covenant faithfulness, generation to generation, to an undeserving, I should even say perhaps, ill-deserving people.

Some covenants are conditional. God says if you do this, then I will do this. The covenant of salvation, the new covenant, the covenant that Jesus brings, is an unconditional covenant. And he says it this way, God does, repeatedly throughout the Scriptures, “I will be your God, you will be my people.” That’s the covenant. The Bible often uses the word *hesed* to explain God’s covenant faithfulness, his loving devotion. I’ve defined it this way, pulling all the definitions together; it’s often translated love or loving-kindness and mercy. *Hesed* is God’s loving-kindness, the consistent, ever-faithful, relentless, constantly pursuing, lavish, extravagant, unrestrained, one-way love of God. That’s what we see in the genealogies. The unrestrained, unending, unstoppable, unshakeable love of God for an ill-deserving people.

If you want to buy somebody a good Bible, buy them the ESV Study Bible. It’s the best study Bible. The notes are incredible. Great gift. If you’ve got a kid and you want to read the Bible to them or maybe they’re up to, like, second grade and they’re reading on their own and you want a Bible they can read, the best Bible for kids is called The Jesus Storybook Bible. It’s a great one. My kids love it. The illustrations are great, every story is about Jesus, it’s really fantastic. The Jesus Storybook Bible. And one of the refrains that echoes throughout the stories and The Jesus Storybook Bible is really about God’s covenant love. His *hesed*. So here’s what The Jesus Storybook Bible describes as the covenant love of God: “God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.” Isn’t that good? I’ll read it again, because I know you want me to. “God loves us with a Never Stopping, Never Giving Up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.”

That’s what we see in Luke 3. God loves these people with a never stopping, never giving up, unbreakable, always and forever love. From one generation to the next. And they sin and they rebel and they fail, and he loves and he pursues and he adores. Not because they’re good, but because he’s good. That’s why the language of God being a father and the church being a family and we being adopted in makes lots of sense to me as a dad. My relationship with Jesus is a covenant relationship. My relationship with my wife is a covenant relationship. My relationship with my children is a covenant relationship. We want Mars Hill to be a covenant church where we covenant together to love, serve, and go through the hard stuff of life together. Not as consumers, but as covenanters.

This idea of covenant, it’s that God loved us before we were born. See, that’s the relationship I have, for example, with my own children. I could use any of them, but I’ll use my oldest daughter, Ashley. She was our firstborn child. I loved her before she was conceived. As a Christian I remember praying to God, asking him to let me be the daddy of a little girl. Just loving her before she was conceived. And then my wife’s pregnant, and we loved her before she was born. An unconditional love. She hadn’t done anything yet. We just loved her, adored her. She’s born. I love her, I get to hold her, I get to raise her and protect her, pray for her, care for her, provide for her, and enjoy her.

Some have asked, “You’ve got five kids, public ministry. What if your kids wander, stray, rebel? Will you love them?” I will love them. I will love them because love changes people. I will pursue them with love because that’s how God deals with me. God pursues me, God loves me, God is patient with me, God is gracious with me, God is honest with me. God as needed disciplines me. Because he’s a covenant dad. He’s a covenantal father. This alters how we have relationships with people, one another, our family and God. It’s a wonderful thing to have covenantal love. And you know what? God gives it through Jesus. He takes away sin, brings the covenant love of God.

And that’s what we see as we look through the list of covenant names. Some of the people we know nothing about. But God knew their name, every day of their life, every hair on their head, every longing of their heart, every thought of their mind. Isn’t that amazing? Some of you are almost

altogether unknown. But God knows you. And he makes note of you, and he has affection for you.

Others in this list are more famous and infamous. Some of them connect directly to covenants, as they are lifted up as covenant heads for covenant love from God. It moves from David to Abraham to Noah to Adam. So I'll take these four names in the genealogy, I'll extricate them, and we'll focus on them.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

We'll start with David. Luke mentions this man David. I'll tell you a bit of him from 2 Samuel 7:11-16: "The LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom." – We're looking for a king with a kingdom. – "He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. . . ." Very important word. "Your throne," – that's the king – "shall be established forever."

God comes to David, little shepherd boy. He's no one, nowhere, doing nothing. God looks at him, this very unlikely candidate, and says, "David, you're going to become a king, and through you will come the King of kings. And you will sit on a throne and rule and reign over a nation, he will reign over all of the nations. You will rule on a throne for a season, he'll rule forever."

First Samuel 16, David is anointed king. He doesn't immediately assume the throne. There's a conflict between him and Saul, an evil king. During that time David is gathering unto himself faithful subjects. And then in 2 Samuel 5 he actually begins to rule and reign.

And Jesus comes in the family line of David as the fulfillment to the Davidic covenantal promise that God's people would be a kingdom and that their Savior the Lord Jesus Christ would be their king. And he comes like David. Seemingly a nobody from nowhere doing nothing. He's poor, he's in a rural town, he's being raised by an adoptive father, he lives in relative obscurity. And he is God become a man. He is the greater David. He is, through his baptism where the Holy Spirit descends on him, and through his resurrection from death after his crucifixion in our place for sins, he is anointed as king. And today there's a battle between Jesus and Satan, as there was between David and Saul. And Jesus is gathering unto himself faithful citizens of his kingdom, Christians called the church. And one day, when he returns he will establish his throne over all the earth, he will rule over all nations, and his kingdom will last forever. And by incorporating David in the genealogy, Luke is showing that the promise to David that we would have the King of kings is fulfilled in the coming and second coming of Jesus Christ.

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Luke then continues backward to Abraham. And he tells us about Abraham, that Abraham is in the family line, is the forefather of the family tree of Jesus. The Abrahamic covenant is very important. It is repeated and emphasized throughout Scripture, Genesis 12, 15, 17, 19, it is echoed in many places. Here is one occasion, Genesis 12:1-3: "Now the LORD said to Abram, ' . . . I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'"

Insofar we can tell, Abram is from a pagan family line, not worshiping the God of the Bible. God comes to him and says, "You and your wife, go to a land I will show you. You will now become the matriarch, patriarch, new legacy, new lineage, new family line." Just like God is doing with some of you. He has a decision to make: will he believe the Lord? Because he and his wife, like Zechariah and Elizabeth earlier in Luke's Gospel, they're elderly, childless, and barren. Hopeless circumstances. And God tells them, "You will have a son. That son will become a nation." That's ultimately the nation of Israel. Through that nation will come a Savior, a deliverer, the seed of Abraham. Abraham has to decide whether or not he believes God; to leave his family, his lineage, his identity, and to trust in God's provision for him and his barren wife. In one of the great statements of Scripture, we are told elsewhere that Abram believed the Lord and it was credited to him as righteousness. Faith. Abraham was justified or saved, Paul says repeatedly in the New Testament, just as we are: by faith. He trusted God like we are to trust God. He trusted that God would send a son, and we trust that ultimately Jesus was and is the Son of God. He is the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant.

And so Abram moves, and he is not without sin. After some years of the promise not being fulfilled that a son would be born, he has an adulterous relationship. But ultimately God is faithful to him, because God is even faithful when we are faithless, the Bible says. And God gives him a son, and that son does become a nation, and that nation does flourish, and through that nation does come Jesus. And the Abrahamic covenant is that through the seed of Abraham, all the nations would be blessed.

When I was in Israel talking to some Jewish friends, they would said, "See, Abraham's seed would be a blessing to the nations of the earth. Israel is the blessing." No, Paul makes this notation in Galatians 3, that the promise was that Abraham's seed would be the blessing to all the nations of the earth. It is "seed," singular, not plural. Meaning one person, not many. Meaning Jesus, not Israel. That Israel is blessed of God and through Israel would come Jesus as the descendant of Israel. He is the blessing to the nations of the earth. Abraham himself was not initially a Jew, he was a Gentile who had faith in God and then demonstrated it by circumcising himself, therefore kicking off the Jewish people. It's a lot, isn't it?

I'll show it to you in Galatians 3, see, because you and I, we tend to just be Gentiles. "I don't know, Abraham, the Jews, I'm not a Jew, what do I have to do with Abraham?" Here's what Paul says in Galatians 3:7-9: "It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham." – You've gotta hear that. You'll need to meditate on that for the rest of your life. It's such an enormous idea. It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. – "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles" – See, the promise to Abraham was for the Jews and the Gentiles, it's for us too. – "by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."

God comes to Abraham and says, "Trust me, I will cause you to be the father of a multitude. Look up at the sky, Abraham. You see those stars? So your descendants shall be." And we Gentiles ask, "How in the world are we included in the Abrahamic covenant?" Answer, by faith. By trusting in the finished work of Jesus. He came through the family line of Abraham. He fulfilled all of the expectations, anticipations, and requirements of the Abrahamic covenant. He is the singular seed, descendant of Abraham. He is for Jew and Gentile. He takes away sin, and through faith in him we are adopted into the family of God, we receive the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. When Luke adds Abraham to the genealogy of Jesus, it is to teach those of us who are non-Jew, Gentile, these great truths.

THE NOAHIC COVENANT

He moves from David to Abraham, back to Noah. And the Noahic covenant. We've looked at the Davidic covenant, the Abrahamic covenant, the Noahic covenant. Now, when he mentions Noah, we have to go back to Genesis 6, and we learn something of the cultural condition of the day, and God's relationship with this man Noah. Genesis 6:5-9: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man . . . But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. . . . Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.'"

Okay, you see, firstly, we're a reformed church theologically. We believe in the sovereignty of God, that God is the highest authority. And some of you will take that to an extreme that is unhealthy and unbiblical. Meaning, you'll assume that everything that happens is what God wants. Not true. Here we hear this condemning statement of total depravity, that everyone, everywhere, is only, always, to the depth of their heart, committed to sinful rebellion against God. Is that what God wanted? No. It says that this deeply grieved the heart of God. You need to know that when we sin, it's not just that we break legal rules, we also break the heart of God. It's not just legal, it's relational. It's not that you just disobeyed the judge, it's that the judge is also your dad. And he loves you. He's heartbroken by your sin and rebellion.

And God is heartbroken, he is grieved in his metaphorical, proverbial heart that humanity exists and lives in such continual obstinate rebellion against him. And God looks at the earth and God has every right to say, "There is no one righteous, no not one. They all deserve condemnation, damnation, judgment. I will send a flood; I will be done with human beings. I am sick of their rebellion and their folly." And instead, he begins with one man. That man is Noah. Noah is not at this point a great man. And he's still going to blow it, after God loves him.

It's a big concept. Noah found what in the eyes of the Lord? Favor. It's the Hebrew word for grace. See, Abraham was justified by faith; Noah was saved by grace, just like us. This is undeserved, ill-deserved loving affection. This is God doing good to those who are evil. That's God.

And what happens is we look at Noah and we want to ask, "Well, what was so special about Noah?" Nothing. Noah's not the special one, God is. Noah's not the good one, God is. Noah is just as bad as everyone else. But God looks at Noah and says, "You know what, I'm going to love you, be good to you, pursue you, forgive you, change you, bless you." Friends, that's how our God works. It's amazing. Some of you are Christians, and you're shocked. We're shocked too. Some of you ask, "Why would God love me? What's special about me?" No, no, no. God's special, we're not. God's gracious, we're not deserving. God's kind and loving and merciful and compassionate and amazing. We shouldn't look into ourselves, "Oh God, you picked me, why am I special?" We should look up to God and go, "God, you're gracious, thank you." That's why we shouldn't be smug like religious people, "Oh, God picked me, not you. Hmm. Remember gym class? I guess I have merit. You? Apparently, you just get hit with the ball a lot, I guess." You know, that's not it. That's not it. See, Noah shows us that there's hope for even the worst of us. Your family, friends, coworkers, relatives, the God-haters, the most defiant-God could have grace on them, change their heart, pursue them, and love them. He does.

So everybody's only evil all the time to the depth of their heart and identity. God chooses-this is election-Noah. Gives him favor. As a result of the grace, "Noah was a righteous man." God gave him righteousness through the grace. "Blameless in his generation," God took away his sin. It's not that he was perfect. Later he's going to get drunk and pass out naked in his tent, right? We wouldn't call you the head of a covenant, we'd call you church discipline case, slash hillbilly.

And "Noah walked with God" by the grace of God. So the grace comes first. Because, see, the story is often told: Everybody was bad except for Noah, so God loved him. No, everybody was bad, God loved Noah and changed him, and kept working on him. So Noah, we read in Peter, was a preacher of righteousness for perhaps a hundred years or more. No one repented. Noah and his sons built a huge ark. It was the mode by which they were to be saved. It was a type of Christ; Jesus is our ark. He gets us not just through the judgment of water, but through the judgment of fire.

Noah and his family by faith, trusting in the promises of God, responding to the grace of God, enter into the ark. God shuts the door, no one else comes, even though they've been invited, as many are invited to Jesus for salvation, only some come. And what happens is, the storm comes and the waters rise and all of humanity on the earth is destroyed except Noah and his family. And they are preserved.

Eventually the water subsides and the land appears, and they exit the ark, kind of like a new Adam and Eve, starting a new humanity in a new world in relationship with God. And so God makes a covenant promise a bit later in Genesis 9, after he is done with judgment, Genesis 9:9-11: "'Behold, I establish my covenant,'" – there's our word – "'with you and your offspring after you,'" – Generational faithfulness of God. Covenantal affection. – "'and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.'"

God says, "I was very patient but I'll be even more patient going forward. I will not flood the earth." And what happens is some people think, "Well,

God hasn't done anything, it's not like he's killed me or struck me dead or sent me to hell. He must not care about what I'm doing, maybe there is no God, maybe he's not paying attention or maybe he approves of my alternative lifestyle. I can even, in fact, use the rainbow, which was the covenant symbol that God would never flood the earth again, to represent my rebellious lifestyle." Crazy. It is not that God doesn't exist, is indifferent, blind, or approving. It's that God is patient. And you and I are enjoying the benefits of the Noahic covenant. That God is inviting us to salvation before he sends us to damnation. And our ark is Jesus. If you're in Christ you will be saved. If not, you will be damned. When he includes this for those who are reading Luke initially-and us, culturally, historically, somewhat removed-it is to show us that God has given us in this life this amazing opportunity to respond to his favor, his grace, as Noah did for ourselves and our children and their children's children.

THE ADAMIC COVENANT

He also includes, Luke does, in the genealogy of Jesus, one more man. He goes all the way back to Adam. Here's what he says about Adam and his relationship to Jesus. Luke 3:38 speaks of Jesus as "the son of Adam, the son of God." The son of Adam, the son of God. Declaring Jesus to be a son of Adam, he is saying that Jesus is fully human, that God became a human being. Not a sinner, but a human being. As Adam was initially without any sin, so Jesus was without any sin. So I want to connect the humanity of Jesus and Adam, but not the sinfulness of Jesus and Adam.

Additionally, in calling him "the son of God," he is declaring Jesus to be God. "The son of God" means the same as God, equal to God, peer to God. It's the language that was used just previously in Luke 3, when Jesus is baptized and the Holy Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove and God the Father speaks from heaven, the whole Trinity is present, and God the Father says of God the Son, "This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased." Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Son of God.

Now, the genealogies in the Bible never include that line. That distinguishes Jesus as altogether unique and different. So-and-so is the son of so-and-so, but Jesus is the Son of God. This is not just a difference in degree, but in kind. He is not just a man, he's the God-man. He's the Son of God, God. He is full humanity, like Adam was originally, without sin. He is fully God, fully man. That's what he is saying.

Now, what this means is there really only are two families. There are two family lines, there are two genealogies and family trees. Adam and Jesus. First Corinthians 15:45, Paul says that it is Adam and Jesus is the last Adam. Those are the two categorical groups of humanity. We have races and nations and cultures and genders and socioeconomic backgrounds and religions, but the truth is there really only are two categories: those who are in Adam, and those who are in Christ. If you want to study this theologically more thoroughly, you want to kick it around your community group, Romans 5:12-21. Unpack it. Romans 5:12-21 is in some ways a commentary on Luke 3:38.

But let me juxtapose Adam and Jesus for you briefly. Adam is a sinner and Jesus is sinless. In Adam we inherit guilt and in Jesus we receive forgiveness. In Adam there is condemnation, in Jesus there is salvation. In Adam there is death, and in Jesus there is eternal life. Where Adam has failed, Jesus has triumphed.

**ARE YOU IN THE FAMILY LINE OF JESUS?
AND FOR US TO ENJOY THE COVENANT BENEFITS, WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE, LIKE ADAM,
AS HIS SONS AND DAUGHTERS, WE ARE ALL SINNERS. WE MUST, LIKE NOAH, RECEIVE AND RESPOND
TO THE GRACE OF GOD GIVEN US IN JESUS. WE MUST, LIKE ABRAHAM, RESPOND TO GOD BY FAITH,
TRUSTING IN THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS. AND WE MUST RECEIVE JESUS AS DAVID DID, AS OUR
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. AND IN SO DOING, WHAT HAPPENS IS THAT WE ARE BORN IN
ADAM, BUT WE ARE BORN AGAIN IN JESUS AND OUR NAMES ARE ACTUALLY ADDED TO THE FAMILY
LINE OF JESUS. IT'S CALLED THE LAMB'S BOOK OF LIFE AND UPON OUR DEATH AND PRESENCE
BEFORE JESUS, THAT BOOK WILL BE OPENED AND THE LIST OF NAMES WILL BE READ AS THIS LIST
OF NAMES HAS BEEN READ, AND IF YOU'VE RECEIVED GRACE FROM, HAVE FAITH IN JESUS AS YOUR
KING, IT WON'T BE JUST A BORING LIST OF NAMES. IT WILL BE YOUR FRIENDS AND YOUR FAMILY AND
YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUR NAME READ, AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY OF
GOD THROUGH THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. I THINK I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO'S EXCITED
ABOUT THIS. [APPLAUSE]**

When we read Luke, we read of people that God was faithful to. And he invites us to respond to him, that he would be our God, and that he would be his people. So my great invitation to you today is, if you're not a Christian, this is where you give your life to Jesus and your sin to Jesus, and you enter into a covenant relationship with God. I'm going to pray, because we have to sing. This is something we should be excited about.

Father God, I thank you that Jesus is a greater king than David. That he has descendants of a greater number than Abraham. That he saves more than the ark of Noah. And that he undoes all that has been done through the rebellion of our father Adam. God, I pray for my friends and our church, that as we read the genealogies of the Bible in general and the genealogy of Luke in particular, we would see that you are a God of hesed, of covenant love, of generational faithfulness, that you are good to us, that you'll be good to our children and our children's children forever. And Lord God, may we, like Noah, receive your grace; may we, like Abraham, respond in faith; may we, like David, serve the purposes of your kingdom, by the grace you give, to the glory you deserve, in Jesus' good name. Amen.

[End of Audio]

Note: This sermon transcript has been edited for readability.

