

# THE REAL JESUS: WHO'S WHO

Week Five | May 6, 2018 | Meet the People Who Waited

## PREPARATION

### GETTING READY

Before your group meets next time, spend some time alone in God's Word reading through this week's text, Luke 3:23-38. Pray that God, through His Spirit, would bring to life the truth of this text and how it applies to your life.

## THIS WEEK

### KEY BIBLICAL TRUTH

God works redemption through history.

### THEOLOGY APPLIED

Luke's genealogy reveals who Jesus really is—the son of David, the Promised One, and the Son of God.

### MEDITATE

*“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. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Samuel 7:12–13).*

## GETTING STARTED

+ Use this section to prepare your heart and mind for the truths of this week. This section will help to introduce the focus of this week's lesson.

**Q:** *Do you know your family genealogy? Why is it interesting to know who your ancestors were?*

**Q:** *When you read the Bible, do you usually skip over the genealogies? Have you ever wondered why they were included?*

Studying genealogy has become a hot new trend in recent years. Instead of just being a common classroom project, it has become a popular hobby. With the advancement and accessibility of DNA testing, people have become fascinated by learning about their past, where they come from, and who they are related to. The study of ancestry has even become the subject a popular TV show, “Who Do You Think You Are?”, in which various celebrities explore their ancestry, unlocking family mysteries, explaining family traits, revealing their lineage and ethnic roots, connecting them to lost relatives, and changing the way they see themselves and their families. We appreciate learning about our genealogy because it helps us see a story bigger than our own. We also learn that our individual stories are not isolated ones. Aspects of who we are are built from those who have gone before us. We are each part of a line—a dynamic, continuing legacy that began before us and will continue after our death. Knowing who your people are tells you a lot about who you are.

Luke understood this concept a long time before DNA testing became a trend. To help explain who Jesus was, he tells us who His people were, the names of those who had gone before Him whose lives were all about the expectation of His coming. As Ligon Duncan points out, “Luke is showing us this family tree in order to teach us the humanity of Christ, that He’s a real flesh and blood human being with a genealogy and a lineage, just like you and me.” Although Jesus could have just appeared out of nowhere, that’s not how God designed it to happen. The real Jesus entered the world the same way you and I do, and Luke uses His genealogy to reveal who He is—the Christ. Once again, Luke weaves historical facts with theological truth, giving us a robust picture of the real Jesus.

**Q:** *While contemporary eye-witnesses of Jesus are really helpful for us to know who the real Jesus is, why do you think those who went before Him are also helpful?*

**Q:** *If you have ever studied your ancestry, what interesting facts have you discovered? How do they illuminate your own story?*

## ■ UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

To kick off our study of The Real Jesus, we have been looking at the historicity of the main characters surrounding Jesus. We first learned about the writer of the gospel of Luke and saw his commitment to historical accuracy and theological depth. That combination is what gives us a living, vibrant, and accurate picture of who Jesus really is. We then learned that Luke was writing to a spiritual seeker named Theophilus. We learned we can come to the book of Luke with our doubts and questions knowing we will find answers. Last week, we learned about the historicity and significance of John the Baptist and his role in Jesus' life.

This week we will look at the people who went before Jesus, who waited for centuries in anticipation of His arrival. Far more than a list of names, this genealogy testifies to who Jesus really is. Today, we will look at Jesus' ancestry listed in Luke 3:23–38, which reveals that Jesus is the son of David, the Promised One, and the Son of God.

1. JESUS REALLY IS THE SON OF DAVID
2. JESUS REALLY IS THE PROMISED ONE
3. JESUS REALLY IS THE SON OF GOD

### GOING DEEPER

+ This next section will help show what God's Word says about this week's particular focus. Read through the Scripture passages and connect the text to this week's biblical truth.

## JESUS REALLY IS THE SON OF DAVID

### ■ LUKE 3:23–38

Q: As you look through the list of names, which ones do you recognize?

Q: Look at the names you don't recognize. Considering that each name is a real person who lived a real life, what thoughts go through your mind as you read them?

Recording ancestry was not unique to Luke. It was a common activity for the Israelite people. Genealogies were

important because they proved who was Jewish and who was not, and God's covenant promises were initially made only with those who belonged to Israel. Preserving the physical line was a big deal because that was the line through which Christ would come. After Christ came, God's covenant promises became available to Gentiles as well. But before He did, careful study and protection of the line was of vital importance.

We studied John the Baptist's testimony of who Jesus is. At Jesus' baptism, we also hear who God says He is, His beloved son with whom He is well pleased. But the genealogy also offers us a testimony of who Jesus is. Thabiti Anyabwile says, "If John's prophetic ministry answers the gossip about the identity of the Christ, and the Father divinely vouches for Jesus as his Son, then the genealogy is the DNA evidence proving that only Jesus is the Christ."

The first thing we notice in this genealogy is that we recognize many names because they played a significant role in Israel's history, and their stories are recorded in the Old Testament. By listing these names and showing their genealogical succession, eventually leading to the birth of Jesus, Luke assures his readers that Jesus really does come through the line of Israel. Deuteronomy 18:15–18 is one of the many passages where we read that the Deliverer God promised back in Genesis 3:15 would come through the line of Israel. Seeing Jesus in a long succession of other Israelites assures us His ancestry is the right one and fulfills God's promise.

Within the list of names, David's is one you definitely will recognize. In 2 Samuel 7:12–16, God promises David that the Savior will be his direct descendent. God promises David that through the Messiah He will establish David's throne forever. But, not just any descendent of David would do. In Jeremiah 22:24–30 and 36:30–31, we learn that the Messiah could not be descended from David through Jeconiah since God declared that none of his descendants would be seated on David's throne. This narrows the field significantly.

It was not even enough to be able to trace your ancestry to David; God gave many specifics that could not be fulfilled by just anyone. One of the ways they can authenticate the Messiah, or verify that He really is the Promised One, is by looking at His lineage. Is He an Israelite and does He come directly from the line of David? If so, does He come from the house of Jeconiah or through one of David's other descendants? Luke gives us the results that answer all three of those questions so we can be sure Jesus really is the Son of David that God promised would reign forever.

**Q:** *Think of other examples in history in which genealogies have been extremely important to prove someone came from a certain lineage.*

Q: *How would this genealogy help a “Theophilus,” a seeker with doubts about who the real Jesus is?*

Q: *What do you need to know about Jesus in order to understand and believe the gospel? How does this help?*

## JESUS REALLY IS THE PROMISED ONE

### LUKE 3:23–38

Q: *What prophecies about Jesus from the Old Testament do you remember? Can you think of any other necessary criteria for the Messiah?*

You may have noticed that Luke’s genealogy is quite different from the one recorded by Matthew. There are some similar names, but quite a few differences as well. Does this mean that Jesus’ lineage is contested or that there are errors in the Bible? Most scholars believe the genealogies are written differently and trace different things. Matthew’s genealogy is shorter and more stylistic. Luke’s genealogy is more like a historical record. It is far more exhaustive and nuanced than is typically seen, even in Jewish culture. Remember, Luke is a Gentile doctor. He has a different eye for things. He is less stylistic and more precise. That is why his account is so prized for its historical accuracy, even by modern standards.

Most scholars also defend the accuracy of Luke’s account because it begins by stating that Jesus was “thought to be” the son of Joseph. In other words, Luke tells us immediately that Joseph was not Jesus’ actual father. He included the prophecy of the virgin birth, reinforcing his assertion that Joseph was not the real father of Jesus. Instead, Luke gives Mary’s lineage, which is the real bloodline of Jesus. In so doing, he shows how Jesus fulfills the criteria given in Isaiah 7:14, that He must be born of a virgin.

About fifteen years ago, a Wycliffe Bible translator in New Guinea was translating the New Testament into a tribal language. He began working on the gospel of Matthew, but decided to skip over the genealogy (the boring part, right?) and move straight to the story. After completing the book, he went back and translated the genealogy. And

as he got through several series of “begats,” the people around them started jumping for joy. They said, “So Adam, and Abraham, and David were all real people? They aren’t just made-up characters for a nice story? They actually lived and had lives just like us? Of course, this is what the translator had been telling them as he translated the whole book, but they didn’t get it until they saw the genealogy. It authenticated the historicity of the message and verified that God had done something real, not fictional.

The Bible tells one big story, God’s story of redemption. The plot runs seamlessly from Genesis to Revelation. Often, we approach the Bible as individual books that contain interesting stories, good advice, and the message of Jesus. But it is far more. The gospel message did not start with the birth of Jesus. It began in the third chapter of Genesis.

In order to understand why the historical facts of Jesus’ life are significant, you have to know the bigger story. In this story, Jesus is the central figure, the hero. The whole Bible is ultimately all about Him! In the Old Testament, God promises that the Savior will come. For many centuries, the Israelites waited. Wavering in their faith, they sinned, and they failed. But God remained faithful to them. Their righteousness came not because they perfectly kept the Law, but because they trusted in the One who was to come, the Christ.

By listing Jesus’s name at the end of a long list, Luke reminds us of this big story. Jesus did not drop from the sky like a Greek demi-god. Many people waited for Him with longing and anticipation of the redemption God would bring through Him. The list of names in the genealogy are the saints of old who point us to Jesus, the One they waited their whole lives for, who has now finally come. Their names all declare Jesus is the Promised One, the one they waited for, the one the prophecies foretold. And He has finally come into the world!

Reading this genealogy with the big story of the Bible in mind connects and unites the two parts of the plot—the part where they were awaiting the Messiah and the part where He has already come. It takes real lives, real years, and real events, and shows how they were all part of God’s story of redemption.

❏: *Reading about people who have gone before us and persevered in their faith is always a deep encouragement. Why do you think that is? How important is a legacy in the faith?*

❏: *None of us has perfect, unwavering, completely steadfast faith. But neither did the people on the list—except for Jesus! What do you think it means to leave a legacy of faith?*

**Q:** *In your spiritual journey have you ever had a moment like the people in New Guinea had when they realized what the Bible is talking about is actually real? What was that like? How did it make a difference?*

## JESUS REALLY IS THE SON OF GOD

### LUKE 3:23-38

**Q:** *Who are the “bookends” of the genealogy? What do you think is the significance of that?*

As we have seen, the Messiah had to fulfill many specific criteria in order to truly be God's Promised One. What a gift it is to us doubting, finite people that God would tell us the criteria in advance so we might be able to verify that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah. You may be able to control many things in life, but your family lineage is not one of them. None of us chooses to be born, much less where, when, and to whom. Jesus could not have fulfilled these criteria by chance or manipulation. You cannot fabricate a genealogy, a public record that can be historically verified. His fulfillment of each of the criteria can only be evidence of God's work! God doesn't call us to blind faith. He does not ask us to forget our doubts. He does not even chastise us for having them. Instead, He calls us to carry our doubts to Him in prayer and to go to His word. He answers us. He doesn't leave us in the dark.

In Matthew's genealogy, Jesus' lineage is traced all the way back to Abraham. But Luke traces Jesus's lineage all the way back to God, highlighting the fact that Jesus is a real, historical man, but He is also the Son of God. Luke also highlights this truth by where he chooses to place this genealogy in his narrative. He situates it right after God testifies that Jesus is His Son. To clear up any confusion, gossip, or doubt about who Jesus might be, God speaks audibly from heaven, calling Jesus His beloved Son with whom He is well pleased. How many people do you know who think they could fully believe something if God audibly spoke it from heaven? How many people say they would fully believe if science and history proved it? Luke gives us both. He gives us an historically accurate account based on many eye-witness testimonies of God audibly speaking from heaven. Then, to further authenticate God's audible claim, Luke gives ancestry evidence. Experience, science, and history all point to the fact that Jesus really is the Son of God.

- Q: *Why is it important that Jesus be more than a good teacher and an historical figure?*
- Q: *Is it harder for you to believe Jesus is the Son of God or that He really existed on earth as an historical person?*
- Q: *Why does the concept of a God-man go against all of our conceptual cubbyholes? Why is it good that it does?*

## NEXT STEPS



+ *Connect the truths from God's Word to your daily life. Process how what you've learned this week will impact the way you live beyond today and into the future.*

- Q: *When you experience doubt, what will you do?*
- Q: *How do you see your own story as part of a broader story? What is that broader story? How does it connect to God's big story?*
- Q: *How can you leave a legacy of faith as an encouragement to those who come after you?*

## PRAY

+ *Use these prayer points to connect your time in prayer to this week's focus.*



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- God, thank You that You don't cast us away when our faith wavers, but You are faithful to hold us fast. Thank You that I can not only see that in my own life, but I can also see it in the lives of many people who have gone before me.
  - Father, thank You for sending your beloved Son whom You are well pleased with so I could be your beloved son/daughter whom You are well pleased with too.
  - Holy Spirit, as I study the Word, show me Christ. Let me not see the Bible as a list of moral recommendations or stories. Show me how Christ is the hero of every part of the Bible.
  - Jesus, thank You that You, the Son of God Himself, entered into history. Thank You for making it possible for me to know You. Help me know You deeper and see You more clearly through this study.

