

3. Recognized as the Last Adam

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 May 2013

Preacher: Bob Fyall

[0 : 00] Now let's pray together. Praise to the holiest in the height and in the depth.

Be praise in all his words, most wonderful, most sure in all his ways. Father, how we praise you for the Lord Jesus Christ, one with you who became one of us and is one of us still.

The last Adam, the second Adam, who undid the damage of the first Adam and who one day will not only redeem his people but renew the whole of creation.

And we thank you for this Gospel of Luke, which so wonderfully and magnificently portrays those early days of his earthly ministry and so clearly and faithfully points to who he was and indeed who he is.

As we meet now, Lord, turning aside from the good things and the bad things, from the ordinary and the spectacular, all the things that make up our lives, we pray that we will open our ears to hear what you have to say to us.

[1 : 14] We will open our eyes to see what you have to show us. And it will work upon our wills so that day by day you become more like him, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen. Well, we've already seen how Jesus Christ, as he begins his public ministry, is introduced by John the Baptist, how he's acclaimed from heaven.

Now we continue in chapter 3, and we're going to read verses 23 to the end. You may not find this the most instantly riveting passage in the whole of the Gospel.

These guys deserve their moment in the sun, and Luke obviously regarded it as important to give us this list. So let's read it together. Let's hear the Word of God.

Luke chapter 3, verse 23, and it's on page 859 of the Bibles. Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about 30 years of age, being the son, as was supposed, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Methat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Janai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Nagai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semain, the son of Joseph, the son of Jodah, the son of Joannan, the son of Reza, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shialtil, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Adi, the son of Kosam, the son of Elmedam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Malia, the son of Mena, the son of Matatha, the son of...

[3 : 25] Thank you. What I like about the New Testament, said the man, is that it's not like the Old Testament, full of lists of names.

Had he got any further than Matthew 1 verse 2? And if he had, he certainly did not get as far as Luke chapter 3 verses 23 to 38. The New Testament is showing us that Jesus breaks into history at a specific point. He is not just king of the Jews, he is king of heaven and earth.

I want to make two points of introduction to this. First of all, why is this here, in this particular place? Matthew gives us a shorter genealogy, but it's at the very beginning of his gospel. I think if we think of the way that this chapter has been developing, Jesus' ministry is being authenticated. Luke is answering the question, who is Jesus?

Why did he come? When did he come? And how do we recognize that he is who he says he is? We began with the Baptist identifying him. John the Baptist, the last and greatest of the prophets, stands on the banks of the Jordan and says he's here. This is the one whom the other prophets have spoken about. And I have the enormous privilege of actually pointing to him, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. So the Baptist identifies him, and in turn, he authenticates the Baptist ministry. The Baptist is put in prison, but Jesus shares in John's baptism.

It's as if Jesus is saying, John is an authentic prophet. John's ministry is a true ministry. And then he's acclaimed from heaven as the Son of God. As we looked at last week, the baptism of Holy Spirit comes on him, and the voice from heaven says, you are my beloved Son.

[5 : 36] And in the words of Scripture, which he himself fulfills. And here he is the true Son of God. Remember, look at the end of the chapter again, the Son of Adam, the Son of God. He is being recognized here as the last Adam, the true Son who triumphed where Adam fell. So he sang a moment or two ago, O loving wisdom of our God, when all was sin and shame. A second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came. So he's recognized as the last Adam. That's the first thing. I think Luke puts it here as a further authentication of who he is. And secondly, Luke has made clear that he is the Son of God from heaven. Luke is the gospel which tells us most about the virgin birth, about the activity of the Holy

Spirit. He is the Son of God come from heaven. But here now, he is the Son of God in terms of his descent from Adam. He is truly human. When he began his ministry about 30 years of age. It's interesting, Luke mentions this detail. In the book of Numbers, that's the age when people began the priesthood, the age of 30. Perhaps significantly, this was the age that David was when he began reigning over the whole of Israel. Being the Son, as was supposed of Joseph. That's his legal status. So he is truly the Son of God from heaven. But he is also the Son of Man on earth. The one who comes to undo the damage of the first Adam. So what are we going to make of this list of names then? I think one says two things.

First of all, the destiny of all humanity is bound up in Jesus Christ. Hence, we go back to Adam. Matthew's genealogy doesn't go back as far as Adam, because Matthew is particularly talking about his significance as king of the Jews and his coming from the line of Abraham. He's not simply for the Jews.

He is God. He is God come forming humanity in his own image. Remember at the very beginning, Adam is made and Eve are made in the image of God. So now he sends the one who is his true image, Jesus, one with God, who becomes one of us without ceasing to be God. So the destiny of all humanity is bound up with Jesus Christ. And that's why the reference to Adam is so important.

There are many puzzling things in the early chapters of the Bible in Genesis 1 to 3. Every time I read these chapters, more and more questions, more and more issues arise. But one fact is clear. There was a real Adam, a real historical individual called Adam. And Paul develops that in Romans 5 and in 1 Corinthians 15. Paul says in Romans 5, sin and death came into the world through a man, Adam, and it's through another man, Jesus Christ, that redemption from sin and death will come. And in 1 Corinthians 15, we die because we are in Adam and we live because we are in Christ. Now this is vital.

[9 : 28] Paul isn't just using an illustration. He isn't saying, remember that old story of Adam and the Garden of Eden. Paul is saying, this is why humanity is the way it is. And Luke is saying, Jesus is descended from Adam as well as coming from heaven. Now that's vital. If there wasn't a real Adam, Adam, the origin of humanity is unknown to us, simply a matter of speculation. There are all kinds of speculation about where humanity came from. The nature of humanity is also a matter of speculation.

If we are not made in the image of God and need that image renewed, then what is humanity? And people have tended either to see humanity as a kind of God or else as a kind of beast. The origin of sin. We don't know where sin came from. Was sin there right from the very beginning? Is it something that gradually grew? And if we didn't have the story in Genesis 3, you wouldn't know. We'd know nothing about the devil.

And of course, in the next study, we are going to meet the devil who is active here as he was in the Garden of Eden. The mixture of good and evil in humanity. The fact that humanity is still in the image of God, although fallen. And the future, the origin and future of creation and the coming kingdom. If there wasn't a real Adam, we know nothing about any of these things. In short, if we lose the first Adam, we lose the last Adam. Because the Adam-Christ parallel is so deeply rooted in the gospel.

And the other thing is, Luke's concern for all humanity is evident here. From the very beginning, God's purpose was universal. The whole of humanity. And indeed, not just for the whole of humanity, but for the whole of the universe. And when Abraham will come to Abraham in a moment or two, when Abraham was called, Abraham was called so that all the families of the earth would be blessed.

See, salvation both comes from the outside. And yet it comes from one who is flesh and blood like us. Any Cornhill student worth their salt will tell you about the God of Genesis 1 up there in heaven, and the God of Genesis 2 who comes right down into earth. That is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the one whom Luke is pointing to here. Jesus Christ, Jesus when he began his ministry, that's the bookend, if you like, and then the other bookend, the son of Adam, the son of God. God's two sons, if you like, one of whom failed and dragged down humanity with him. One of whom triumphed and opens the kingdom of heaven to all who will believe. So that's the first thing. The destiny of all humanity is bound up with Jesus Christ. But the second thing is, Jesus is also the fulfillment of what we call salvation history. That is, he fulfills Israel's story as well. And this is shown here by highlighting the way he relates to Israel. Now remember, Israel was chosen from the beginning to be a light to the nations, through that in the prophets, particularly the prophet Isaiah.

[13 : 24] Something for which they singularly failed. But nevertheless, that was God's purpose. The nation of Israel was to be an object lesson, if you like, of the coming kingdom. And there are two particular names in this genealogy whom we'll look at. We'll look at them in chronological order. Verse 34, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham. Now no detail is given here, obviously, but to the original hearers and to readers of the Bible in general, this name is going to ring bells.

Abraham is the focus of all the promises in Genesis 12 to 25. And in him are linked the whole of humanity and Israel itself. After all, he came from a pagan city in Mesopotamia, the hour of the Chaldeans.

But he is also the ancestor, not just of Israel, but of the present Israel, the one people of God throughout the centuries. And from the very beginning, his call was so that all the nations would be blessed. The Bible is always outward looking, always looking that blessing will flow out, flow out to others. It's very interesting, as Luke continues the story in his second book, in Acts chapter 1, his followers show that they still haven't got it. Lord, will you now restore the kingdom to Israel? Now Jesus doesn't mock them. What he says essentially is, you haven't realized how big this is. I want you to take this message not just to Jerusalem and Judea, but to Samaria and to the ends of the earth. The ultimate destination of the gospel is the ends of the earth. So Abraham mentioned here, representing the, as I say, what's sometimes called salvation history, the story of the people of God. And the other great name, verse 31, the son of David.

Why Nathan is mentioned here is, Nathan, of course, this is not Nathan the prophet, who is crumbling to David's story. This is David's third son, born to him in Jerusalem. But the point that's being made is that Jesus comes from the royal line. And this already has been a huge theme in Luke.

Luke's already emphasized this in chapter 1. Joseph is betrothed to, sorry, Mary is betrothed to Joseph of the house of David. And then in chapter 1 again, Gabriel says to Mary, the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And raised up for us a horn of salvation in the house of his servant David. Chapter 2, it is in the city of David that he's born. And he's the king, not only of Israel, but of the world. Book of Revelation, the line of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered. So you see, these two great names, Abraham and David, in a sense, they're hourglass names.

[16 : 58] The whole of history passes through them. And of course, Jesus himself divides time. But you'll be glad to know I'm not going to comment on all the names, largely because most of them are unknown or only have a brief mention. But I do want to make one comment. They are significant in the story of salvation as well. Because not just through Adam, not just through Abraham, not just through David, but through them comes the line, the bloodline, if you like, from which the last Adam came. And these lists of names, which the Bible is so prolific in, they actually do show God's concern, not just for the well-known, not just for the big names, but for the unknown, for those who, in their day and generation, were significant but are not remembered.

It's not important that our names are not in the Bible, because our names are not in the Bible. What is important is that our names should be written in heaven. That is the important thing.

And that we belong to the last Adam, the man of heaven. And then release what this is about. And let me just make two points as we close. The first thing is this. Luke clearly, as I said, regards this as important. Luke was not given a certain number of words and thought, oh, I'm missing out of my total. I'd better pad it out with this. Luke puts this in because of his conviction that it is from the historical Adam through these historical individuals that the historical Jesus comes, the Lord from heaven, but also the Lord who descends through humanity. And it's this paradox of God become human. This paradox of the one who can unite us. And that's really the second point.

If we're going to understand the Lord Jesus Christ properly, we've not to see him as the highest and most unique specimen of humanity, who, as it were, stands at the head of humanity and stretches his hand out the gulf to touch God. And we hang on to his coattails, so to speak, and are dragged up along with him. That's not what the Bible is saying. The Bible is saying something very different.

Jesus is the hand of God stretching out across the gulf to lift us up to him by his grace. Jesus, the last Adam, the son of God, son of Mary, the son of man. That is the Savior of the world, whom Luke is presenting the Savior of the world then and the Savior of the world now. Let's pray.

[20 : 06] In God our Father, we thank you for those, that list of names we have looked at, some of them great names that resound down the centuries, others unknown or virtually unknown. And we thank you, Lord, for the great and wonderful privilege that has caught us up in that family as well, the family of grace. And we pray that we may indeed rejoice in this, that in our lives we may point to the last Adam, to the son of God and the son of man, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Amen.