

**The Real Jesus**  
**Luke 3:21-38**  
**Berean Baptist Church**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

Who was Jesus? Was he a great but merely human moral teacher? Was he an angel or the highest of the angels? Was He a partially divine being – a god among men – but not quite human? Was He just a liar and fraud? Everything that we believe about Jesus' teaching depends on His identity.

And so, as the mature Jesus is about to step on the stage of Luke's Gospel, Luke shows us the real Jesus: the Son of God who was numbered with transgressors. Grasping Jesus' identity is foundational to the Christian life and a part of every step of Christian growth.

*Believe on Jesus as the son of God and son of man!*

**Luke 3:21a Among Sinners...**

**Vs 21 “that Jesus also being baptized,”** For Luke, Jesus baptism is not as important as it is for Matthew. But the fact that Jesus received the immersion of repentance is profound. Jesus had no sin to repent of, why would He be baptized?

When Matthew tells of this day he shares how much confusion Jesus caused by coming forward for baptism.

“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.”

People have debated Jesus' baptism for years and there may be more than one reason that the Lord chose to be baptized, but the key reason is Jesus' full participation with sinful humanity. By His own choice, Jesus was numbered with transgressors (counted with sinners); He was born into the cursed world, he died in the company of criminals and shared the symbol of repentance with convicted sinners – all without sin of His own.

A sinner saved by grace (in other words, “a Christian”) is baptized to identify with Jesus (Rom 6:5) and Jesus was baptized to identify with sinners.

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor 5:21).”

“...God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (Rom 8:3).”

To save sinners Jesus came "in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom 8:3)" and to intercede for transgressors he was "numbered with transgressors (Isa 53:12)."

Jesus' baptism shows his voluntary identification with, and love for, repentant sinners. He emptied himself of divine privilege to participate in worship with wicked people who were trying to start fresh. *Believe on Jesus as the son of man who came to save sinful men!*

*And follow Him in baptism! He was baptized to identify with you, and if you believe that then you should be baptists to identify with Him!*

### **Luke 3:21b-22 ...Walks the Son of God.**

Luke's main interest is not the baptism but what happens next. Jesus prayed after he came up out of the water and in rapid succession, we see that this man, numbered with ordinary sinners, was far from ordinary.

### **Vs 21b The heavens opened as the Son is baptized.**

When we hear that “**the heavens opened**” we should be thinking of apocalyptic visions. The last time the heavens opened in Luke, armies of angels geared for war poured out into the sky above Bethlehem. But instead of a battle cry, they sang of peace (Luke Ch 2).

What follows is a revelation from God.

### **Vs 22 The Holy Spirit descends.**

By saying the Spirit descended like a dove in “a bodily shape,” Luke tells us that this was not a mere vision. On that day, people saw a physical object shaped like a dove which they later understood was some kind manifestation of the Spirit of God.

### **Vs 22 “like a dove upon him”** It's hard to read this and not think of Noah's dove.

“And God remembered Noah, and every living thing...Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground...And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth (Gen 8:1-11).”

For this reason, the dove is often seen as a symbol of God's faithful mercy. But there's no reason in the text to interpret the dove in this way.

### **Vs 22 God the Father speaks: “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”**

The closest reference to this amazing event is the delivery of the Law on Sinai. To institute the Old Covenant, God reveals His Law. And now at the beginning of the New Covenant, God reveals His son.

The language powerfully and emphatically singles Jesus out. He is in a perfect and unique relationship with the Father and the Father is fully satisfied by Him.

This complete satisfaction is true in Jesus' life and His death. For Jesus to die for the sins of others He had to be the perfect, full sacrifice.

“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb 9:14).”

*Believe on Jesus as the Son of God who has a perfect relationship with the Father and is able to heal your broken relationship with the Father!*

## **Vs 22 The Trinity**

Notice how this verse is inescapably trinitarian. Some people, perhaps well-meaning, have tried to remove the difficulties of the doctrine of the trinity by saying that there is one God who takes three forms.

But Luke's account of the baptism has the Son, and the Spirit in the same place and the same time; and the voice of the Father is heard at this time. These three, Father, Son, and Spirit, are three distinct persons.

*Believe on Jesus as the Son of God who has come to save sinners!*

## **Luke 3:23-38 The Son of God is Counted Among Sinners**

People in Bible times, especially Hebrews, were passionate about family history. Family history and speculations about genealogy could be a consuming fascination leading people away from practical faith.

“Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do (1 Tim 1:4).”

But there is a place for genealogy in Luke's history; this information is here for a reason. Matthew and Luke both give Jesus' genealogy but they go in different directions. Luke counts from Jesus, back to Adam. Matthew counts from Abraham, forward to Jesus. Matthew starts with Abraham, emphasizing Jesus' Jewishness. But Luke goes all the way back to Adam, emphasizing Jesus' connection with all of humanity.

The genealogies' more substantive difference is between King David and Jesus' grandfather – Joseph's father. Luke says that Joseph's father (Jesus' grandfather) is Heli, but Matthew says that Joseph's father is Jacob.

Luke: "of Joseph, of Heli (Eli)...of Nathan, of David."

Matthew: “David begot Solomon...Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary (not *the* Jacob from the OT).

Here are some possible explanations of the difference:

1. Joseph had two fathers: a biological father and a legal father. This would be very normal. In Old Testament Law, if a husband died without a son, an eligible relative was to marry the widow and raise up a son to carry on the name of the deceased. This was called a “levirate marriage.”

So, if Jacob died before Joseph was conceived. Heli (the eligible relative) would have married Joseph's mother, conceived and raised Joseph. Joseph would be Heli's biological son, but Jacob's legal son.

2. Another possibility is that Luke's genealogy is actually of Mary, not Joseph. Matthew's language makes it unavoidable that he is talking about Joseph's line. But Luke's language could be understood as “father” or “father-in-law.” So Luke is saying: “Joseph's father-in-law was Heli (Mary's Dad) and his father was (Mary's Granddad) Matthat...”

This is a possible reading of Luke's genealogy. However, there's just no evidence that Luke meant to

give us Mary's line. But, on the other hand, Luke is known for having a special focus on women.

**Vs 23 “ And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age”** The responsibility of manhood began to fall to a Hebrew boy when he turned 13, but he was not considered fully mature until he turned 30.

The priests were not allowed to serve in official positions until they turned 30 (Num 4:47). David was 30 years old when he became king (2 Sam 5:4). Joseph was 30 years old when he began serving Pharaoh in Egypt (Gen 41:46).

### **Vs 23 & 38 The last Adam descended from the first Adam**

Mathew's genealogy is very Hebrew. It starts with Abraham and proceeds like an Old Testament genealogy.

But Luke's genealogy is about Jesus' connection to all humanity. The format is much simpler.

And especially so in Luke's Greek. All of the "which was the son of" are added in English for clarity. From Vs 23b, Luke just writes a list that reads thus: "Joseph, of Heli, of Matthat...of Adam, of God." Jesus came as a complete and perfect man free from the curse that hounds all of the decedents of Adam.

But the last Adam was every bit as “Adam” (“Adam” means “human”) as the first Adam. “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit...The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven (1 Cor 15:45-47).”

Luke's genealogy lists over 70 humans spanning thousands of years, and every one of them lived under the curse of sin. But only one of them chose to – the only one who deserved heaven chose to live and die on the cursed earth to save cursed humans – Jesus.

*Understand Jesus' full participation with humanity!*

### **Vs 23 & 38 A Promise Kept**

The first Adam and his wife received a promise from God

“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen 3:15).”

At the cost of a painful injury, one of Adam's descendants would destroy the creature that led their family into sin. Jesus fulfills this promise.

This genealogy reminds us that God keeps his promises from generation to generation.

*Understand that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise to humanity!*

### **CONCLUSION**

**To people unsure about Jesus,** this passage shows Jesus' full humanity and full divinity manifest in one person. The Father, Son, and Spirit are of the same essence but distinct in persons. The entire Christian faith rests on Jesus' identity.

He is the perfection of humanity and the perfect revelation of Divinity; He is the image of the invisible God and the inheritor over all creation (Col 1:15).

*Believe on Jesus as He has revealed Himself!*

**For Christians,** Jesus' special relationship with the Father and status as the perfect son and sacrifice calls us to great confidence and a living, working faith.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Heb 10:19-25).” See also 1 Peter 1:13-17.

*If you believe on Jesus as the Son of God, then live out your faith by good works, living the life of the church in holiness!*

**For Christians,** Jesus' love for sinners and decision to be numbered with us is an endless source of comfort and hope.

“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Heb 4:15-16).”

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not (Isa 53:3).”

*If you believe on Jesus as the son of man, then come to Him continually for help!*

*And resting in Him as the one who understands all of your sorrows!*

*Believe on Jesus as the son of God and son of man!*